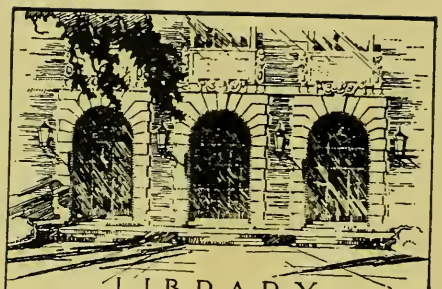
Captain Haverty's Wooing



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CAPTAIN HAVERTY'S WOOING.

A Novel.

BY

FRANK TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

'BROKEN FETTERS,' 'THE MARKED MAN,' 'AN OLD MAN'S SECRET,'
'A WOMAN'S ERROR,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHARLES J. SKEET, 10, KING WILLIAM STREET,
CHARING CROSS.
1880.

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To

THE MOST HONOURABLE

THE MARCHIONESS OF SALISBURY

THESE VOLUMES

ARE,

BY KIND PERMISSION AND PROFOUND RESPECT,

Dedicated

BY

HER LADYSHIP'S

OBEDIENT, HUMBLE SERVANT,

FRANK TROLLOPE.

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CAPTAIN HAVERTY'S WOOING.

CHAPTER I.

The village of Bilford is, perhaps, one of the most picturesque spots in England, scarcely known to the outer world till within the last thirty years. It is sheltered by surrounding hills, not alone from the piercing easterly winds, but from the prying eyes of tourists. Shut out as it seems to be from the busy world, it is barely three miles from a cathedral town of considerable size and population, and not more than a mile from a turnpike road.

Bilford was as little known to the world as the world was known to it. Nevertheless, it had its fashions and its society as well as Scarborough, Brighton, and Tunbridge Wells. It had, too, its own opinions upon the

political and other topics that reached it from without, to say nothing of those that arose within itself; the latter often carried to an extreme of punctilious stiffness and formality that would have greatly astonished the outer world.

Seldom visited by strangers, and relying chiefly on its own resources for support, the village of Bilford was little beholden to the external world for anything it possessed or enjoyed. It boasted of having its own butcher, grocer, baker, shoemaker, blacksmith and tailor. It had, too, its own surgeon, parson, and parish clerk, the latter being by trade a carpenter and undertaker as well as sexton.

Existing in itself and, as we may say, for itself, Bilford had little occasion to mix much with the rest of the world, with which it was but slightly acquainted. Its 'society' consisted of the clergyman, the surgeon, and the few families who occupied some eight or ten moderate-sized houses. The village had one long straggling street of thatched cottages. It had never been known to depart from its customary habits, nor to take a single step either backward or forward, downward or upward.

With the exception of the 'society' already mentioned, the inhabitants of Bilford were entirely of the humbler order and rustic habits; still they were cleanly, and, with one or two exceptions, well-behaved in their conduct to the eight or ten occupiers of the larger houses.

The 'society' of Bilford was very select, and though small in number, considered themselves exceedingly "genteel." It was, however, divided into two distinct classes, the first of which, as a matter of course, consisted of the parson and his family, a retired judge and his family, two half pay military officers, a banker and his wife, and two or three outsiders, who resided a short distance from the village, and came within the sphere of its influence. Among these were two families of considerable local importance, of which they were perfectly aware, and took especial care that the fact should be well known to others. One of these was Henry Ingram, Esq., of the firm of Henry Ingram and John Day, bankers in Weston. We must not omit to mention the fact that Bilford had its own post-office, and an inn called the Ingram Arms.

Mr. Henry Ingram lived at Ingram

Park—so named in honour of its owner. The house was large, and the park, shrubberies, gardens, and ornamental pleasure-grounds extensive and beautiful, especially a fernery, which was not surpassed by anything of the kind in England. Mr. Ingram's establishment consisted of a butler, footman, page, cook, kitchen-maid, and four female servants, four gardeners, coachman, groom, and stable-help; three carriages and four horses.

Mr. Ingram's partner—John Day, Esq.—and family resided in another fine place called Sunnydown House, and lived in equal style. Both these estates were about a mile and a quarter from Bilford, but in somewhat opposite directions, and the owners were both magistrates.

In the outskirts of the village was also the residence of General Fielden, a gallant officer and county magistrate; and at a short distance beyond, an old companion-in-arms, a Colonel Haverty and his wife lived. General Fielden's wife had been dead some years, and his only son had fallen in India in the cause of his country.

We must not forget to mention Bilford Hall, the residence of a small, but rather

wealthy, landed proprietor named Wyndham, his wife and beautiful daughter, Blanche.

The second class was headed by the surgeon, who resided in a rather small house in the middle of the village, but not among the fashionable residences to which we have alluded; a solicitor, whose position was not sufficiently elevated to entitle him to the *entrée* of the upper class. One or two merchants and their families, with occasional visitors from Westdon, formed the chief body of the second class.

Colonel Haverty could scarcely be said to belong to either class in particular. Although a strict observer of every rule relating to military etiquette, he had great contempt for the petty jealousies and distinctions of conventional society as generally exhibited—more especially in smaller communities—and was too free-hearted and outspoken, and too expansive in his sympathies, either to study to conform to the one class to the exclusion of the other, or to content himself with the narrow sphere of its social intercourse, while a wider or more general circle was within his reach.

The colonel and his family were almost the only ones in the village who mingled freely with both classes in Bilford. At first

his conduct in this respect gave rise to considerable animadversion on the part of the first class; but his good-humoured independence of character, coupled with his own high social standing, soon convinced the exclusives of the utter uselessness of attempting to confine him to their own clique; while, at the same time, he was a man of far too much mark to be slighted or shunned by them. He and his family, therefore, formed a connecting link between these two otherwise widely separated, though nearly connected, classes.

For its general knowledge of what was going on in the world Bilford was indebted to one or two weekly newspapers, published in Westdon; one of which, the faithful organ and representative of the *élite* of that city, was written and supported by the cathedral 'dignitaries,' and consequently purchased by a few elderly ladies and the vicar, and nearly the whole of their 'circle.' The other paper, less attached to the special interests and views of the same dignitaries, and occasionally treating the opinions of the august bishop himself with the most profane disrespect—as they called the criticisms of the paper in question upon the eccentric vagaries of that episcopal prince—and of

more liberal sentiments. The other was, of course, high Tory in its politics, and consequently much more 'respectable' in the eyes of the first-class than its contemporary, which was chiefly bought by the second section of Bilford 'society.' These, with an occasional stray London paper which came to the colonel, were almost the sole means of information that the village of Bilford possessed of the busy world. It consequently happened that often the most important events were only beginning to be discussed there when almost forgotten at the scenes of their occurrence, or had almost ceased to be of interest to the rest of the world.

Thus, some time after the battle of Alma had been fought, they heard that the united armies of England and France had landed in the Crimea; and it was not till the allies were preparing to evacuate that scene of so much suffering, mismanagement, and ultimate triumph, that the intelligence reached Bilford that the great object of the campaign had been accomplished, and Sebastopol had fallen before the English and French forces, after one of the fiercest and most sanguinary struggles in the records of war.

But what, it may be asked, had the fall of

Sebastopol to do with the quiet village of Bilford? We shall see presently. Even this peaceful valley, which seemed so cut off from the rest of the world that if London itself had fallen it could hardly have felt it, was not unaffected by the terrible conflict in the distant Crimea. Colonel Haverty was, of course, the great oracle and source of information, as well as reference, on this subject, not only on account of his being a military man, but also that his son had been engaged in the war; which was a double reason in the eyes of his neighbours and friends for consulting his opinion and deferring to his experience and information.

At length, as we have said, the intelligence that the great stronghold of Russian aggression had fallen reached even Bilford, and the colonel and his wife had the inexpressible satisfaction of learning that their son, though severely wounded in the last fearful struggle, in which he had most honourably distinguished himself, and had received the warmest praise from the lips of his commanding officer, the gallant old Sir Colin Campbell, was still alive, and on his way home to recruit his health and strength after the privations he had so long endured, and the severe wounds he

had received when leading on his men against the deadly batteries of Sebastopol.

This was agreeable news to one or two of the mothers in the neighbourhood, as well as to the colonel himself and his good wife, and not a few young ladies, who all looked forward to the return of the young Captain Haverty with no small degree of interest and anxiety; not only on account of the fresh life he was expected to instil into the society of the place, but of the reasonable probability there was of his either falling in love with one or other of the young ladies themselves, or of being manœuvred into matrimony by their mothers. For though it was well enough known that Colonel Haverty was not by any means a wealthy man, and that his son had little beyond his pay to live upon, yet there were some young ladies in and near the village of Bilford who would have no objection to share the fortunes of the gallant young officer, and whose parents would be equally willing to secure the same object.

There was, however, one young lady who looked forward to the return of Captain Haverty with the most affectionate interest; this was the daughter and only child of Mr. Wyndham, of Bilford Hall, which place lay

a little to the left, about half a mile from the village, at the end of the valley.

Blanche Wyndham and William Haverty had known each other ever since they were children, and had grown up together into mutual affection. The parents on both sides being on intimate terms, almost daily visiting each other, their children had been continually in each other's society, which had resulted in the reciprocal attachment of Blanche Wyndham and William Haverty. The former, from a bright-eyed, dark-haired, rosy-cheeked, high-spirited child, had grown into a tall, handsome, elegant, and beautiful girl, of the most gentle character and amiable disposition, admired by all who saw her, and loved by all who knew her; and the latter, from a quick, intelligent, impetuous boy, had become a fervent, fearless, handsome young man and gallant officer of the 78th Highlanders, at the head of whom he had scaled the terrible Heights of Alma and driven the Russians from the entrenched camp at the top of the hill, chased ten times his own numbers before him at Inkermann, and faced the tremendous guns of Sebastopol, when the last grand attack was made upon it, and materially assisted in its capture.

The attachment between William Haverty and Blanche Wyndham, the former now in his twenty-fifth year and the latter about three years younger, was not unknown to the parents on either side, though their affection for each other had rather been exhibited by looks or tones of voice, or any other of the delicate media of intercommunication between two young and faithful hearts, than by words or language, even to themselves. It was only at their last parting that either of them had betrayed any of the strong feelings of regard which had long lain almost dormant in their breasts for each other, or uttered a word indicative of their affection; and amid the many loving hearts that watched with agonising anxiety the fluctuating vicissitudes of that dreadful campaign in the Crimea, there was not a truer, warmer, or braver than that of Blanche Wyndham's; and when the account of his gallant deeds and honourable advancement reached his anxious parents, not even they felt more proud satisfaction than she did, or more anxiety to welcome him home. Nor was she less anxious for his return on another ground. A few months ago she had been prevailed upon to attend one of the county balls which

were periodically held in Westdon, where she had met with a Mr. James Murray, who had been introduced to her by one of her female acquaintances, and who not only paid her much more attention during the rest of the evening than was agreeable to her, but had continued to do so ever since; and she felt the more uneasy on the score that she began to see that her parents, to whom Mr. James Murray had been hitherto only partially known, not only seemed to suspect the motives of his frequent visits, but apparently approved them; and she hoped that the return of Captain Haverty would relieve her of that gentleman's attentions for the future.

Mr. James Murray was about forty-one or forty-two years of age; a big, heavy, coarse, proud man, a county magistrate, and of very old family; supposed to be wealthy, which latter was a great mistake, as every acre of land that had ever belonged to his ancestors was mortgaged to the very utmost of its value. And it was only because he had heard that Blanche Wyndham was likely to be well endowed that he had paid her any attention, and fancied he saw the prospect of recovering the title-deeds of at least a

portion of the Glemham Hall estates by means of her expected fortune; otherwise, not even the beauty, merits, and accomplishments of Blanche Wyndham would have attracted the lofty notice of Mr. James Murray. For though of an old and highly respectable family, the Wyndhams were perhaps as proud, in their own fashion, as he was, but were rather characterised by thrifty economy than a desire for local influence or distinction, which very probably was the principal reason of their encouraging than discountenancing the visits of a suitor to their daughter, who was thought to possess much property in the county. They were well aware of the attachment between their daughter and William Haverty, but never for a moment doubted whatever feelings Blanche might have had for her early playfellow, that they would speedily vanish before the prospect of so much more advantageous a match as this would be, than with an officer who had little, if anything, but his pay to live upon.

Now it so happened that, although neither Blanche Wyndham nor her parents knew of it, that this same James Murray and William Haverty were already upon any-

thing but friendly terms with each other. A short time before the breaking out of the Russian war had called the latter away to fight the battles of his country in the cause of freedom, Lieutenant Haverty, being home for a week on leave of absence, having met James Murray at an archery meeting in the neighbourhood, and carried off a prize which the other seemed to have made sure of winning, in the heat of his vexation and disappointment Mr. Murray had boastfully made use of some expressions of a personal and insulting kind, which the fiery descendant of the gallant Havertys took up in a manner which, but for the innate cowardice of his opponent, combined with the interference of some of the friends of both parties, might have led to serious and disagreeable consequences. But Mr. Murray having, by the advice of his friends, consented to make an apology and retract the offensive expressions he had used, Lieutenant Haverty, partly out of contempt for his big, burly rival, and partly from an unwillingness to engage in any quarrel, had allowed the matter to drop, though he had ever afterward no small dislike and aversion to Mr. Murray, which was fully reciprocated by the

other, with this difference, however, that few things would have given greater satisfaction to the latter than an opportunity for revenge upon the lieutenant.

Such was the state of affairs in the village of Bilford when intelligence reached it of the fall of Sebastopol and the expected return of Captain Haverty, for such was the rank he had attained by his gallantry at Alma and Inkermann, and which he had held at the time he was severely wounded by the guns of the Mamelon.

CHAPTER II.

Captain Haverty, having partially recovered of his wounds before he reached England, after landing at Dover came on to London, to attend a *levée* of the Queen and receive from her hands the Victoria Cross, which he had so well earned by his bravery in the face of the enemy.

His gallant heart swelled proudly as that honourable decoration was placed upon his bosom, amid the enthusiastic cheers of assembled thousands, for, thanks to the *Times*, his noble deeds and those of his brave companions-in-arms were well known to his admiring and grateful countrymen — and countrywomen too—for never had the noble and generous sympathies of the female character been exhibited in more beautiful colours than they were, not only in their

affectionate reception of the returning heroes, but throughout the whole of the terrible sufferings and struggle of the war.

It was not alone the cheers of the crowd that made his heart beat with joy and pride as the well-merited decoration was placed on his breast; it was the thought that he could carry back to his beloved parents, and her who in his triumph he felt was dearer to him than ever, this proof of his courage and token of his gentle and warm-hearted Queen's appreciation of his gallant services in her cause and that of his country.

Impatient to see his beloved parents, and not less to receive the expected welcome of Blanche Wyndham, Captain Haverty hurried over some business he had to execute in London, and, accompanied by a faithful Irish servant, who had followed and shared with him all the dangers, privations, and vicissitudes of the Crimean campaign, hastened off towards Bilford as fast as an express train could carry them.

Though considerably recovered from the effects of the sufferings he had undergone and the wounds he had received, Captain Haverty was still far from enjoying his usual health and strength, and by the time he

arrived at Westdon Station, a distance of nearly two hundred miles from London, he felt considerably fatigued with his journey, and tired with sitting so long, for, except for a few minutes at Swindon Station, he had not left his seat in the carriage during the whole of the journey.

The distance between the Westdon Station and Bilford was about three miles, and feeling rather chilled and stiff from the want of exercise, Captain Haverty, instead of taking a cab, instructed the stationmaster, to whom he was known, to forward his luggage for him, and, followed by his servant, Patrick O'Brien by name, who carried a small carpet-bag in his hand, he took his way down the side of a river, by a sort of foot-path, toward the bridge, which stood upon the outskirts of the town, about half a mile farther down, where he crossed over.

After walking for some time he left the main thoroughfare and proceeded by a foot-path well known to him, across the fields and over the hill towards the village of Bilford, which lay in the valley below. What might also have no slight share in inducing him to take this road was that it led within a few yards past Bilford Hall, the residence

of Blanche Wyndham and her parents, near to which it again joined the main road.

It was a cold, frosty afternoon near the end of December, and the train, which should have reached Westdon at half-past three o'clock, did not arrive till a quarter to four. It was consequently dusk before he left the station, and by the time he commenced his walk across the fields, after leaving the main road already mentioned, it was almost dark, though the moon was now visible, and shedding a faint light over the dim landscape.

But Captain Haverty's thoughts were too much occupied, and his heart too much excited by the anticipated happiness of so soon meeting those dear to him, to care for this. From childhood the path had been familiar to him, and he had no fear of missing his way or meeting with any interruption, although the loneliness of the road and the rather doubtful character of one or two houses which stood within a short distance of it, near to where it branched off from the main thoroughfare, rendered it not over safe for travellers at night.

But even Captain Haverty, had he thought of this—which he had not—would not have

been deterred from taking the road that soonest led him home, had he even been by himself, much less when he had his trusty follower, Patrick O'Brien, to assist him in case of any attack. No occurrence of this kind entered his thoughts as he strode along in the cold, clear evening, invigorated by the fresh air and exercise, and forgetful of his fatigue and recent weak health in the natural excitement of approaching his home. His servant, whom he had picked up at Alma, being a stranger to the neighbourhood, as well as without the same cause for agitation, was consequently more alive to surrounding objects.

'I beg your honor's pardon,' said O'Brien in a suppressed voice, stepping up to his master, who had been walking rapidly on a few paces before him at a rate which seemed to try the speed of his servant to keep up with him— 'I beg your honor's pardon,' said he, touching his hat as he spoke with a military air, 'but, captain, didn't you see a suspicious-looking spalpeen looking over that ould clay wall just now, as them villanous Rooshans did over the walls o' Sebastopoul when they were pointing their rifles at your honor's own person when ye resaived that same

wound which has left its mark on yer own forehead there? Bad luck to them!'

'No, O'Brien, I didn't see anyone,' replied the captain, stopping short and smiling at the rather far-fetched comparison, as he thought. 'But you don't expect to meet any Russians here, do you, to shoot us, over these walls? That's only the clay wall of a market-garden, and if you saw anyone, I dare say it was only a labourer looking at us in the hope that we were going to buy some holly with which to decorate our rooms at Christmas.'

'Och! niver a bit of that, captain. He had the very looks of a villin that would make no bones of shooting a gintleman through a hedge or over a wall. By St. Patrick! there he is agin,' said O'Brien in a whisper, pointing a little before them, where a slouched hat was just seen over the top of the wall. 'I don't like the looks of that spalpeen at all, at all. Let me, your honor, just march forward and challenge him afore ye advance, in case he's an inimy on the look-out for yer honor, and I'll settle the matter with him without any risk to yer honor's dignity from such mane rascals as him.'

'Nonsense, Patrick! there's no one can have any object in waylaying me. Besides, no one knew I was to come home to-day; not even my father and mother are certain of it. But if that is a man he would be rather cautious about attacking us, seeing that the odds are against him.'

'Och, but he may be only the scout or picket o' the main body o' the inimy,' replied Patrick. 'By my faith, I don't like the looks o' that slouching hat o' his at all.'

'People don't shoot each other over walls or through hedges in this country, O'Brien, as they do in Ireland. Besides, as I have said, there is no one who can have any enmity against me, or any knowledge of my return to-night.'

'Och, I'm not so sure about that enmity ye spake of. There may be more reason than yer honor thinks of why some people shouldn't have wished ye to come home agin, and may have got to know of yer expected return in some way or other. Mayhap there may be some young lady who looks for yer return, and some young gintleman who would ha' been very glad to have niver seen ye back agin, on account of that same young lady, and wouldn't mind trying to

prevint it even now, either himself or paying somebody ilse to try his hand at doing so,' replied O'Brien, with a knowing, half-grinning look at his master, who, half amused and half struck with the remarks of his servant, but quite sceptical of his belief that anyone could possibly be watching him, resumed his walk, while the latter mechanically fell a few steps behind and followed him.

The foot-path had hitherto ran along and close to the side of some market-gardens and orchards, which were only separated from it by a sort of mud-wall, here and there overgrown with brambles, ivy, or some other tangled brushwood, on the one hand; with a high-jagged hedge, bordering some meadows, on the other. The road was narrow, and owing to the wall on the one side and the hedge on the other, and numbers of large trees overhanging it, made it also very dark.

However, as Captain Haverty had nothing to fear from anyone as far as he knew, and would not have turned back or paused if he had, he walked steadily but briskly forward, amused with the quaint notion of his servant, and perhaps more interested in his observa-

tions than even that quick-sighted, keen-witted Hibernian suspected, who from some casual remark of his master's, as well as his impatience to reach home, had come to the conclusion that there was someone else as well as his parents he was anxious to see, while his later remark had merely been the result of a sudden thought that occurred to him. That he was pretty near the truth with respect to the first, the reader needs not to be told; but how far he was correct with respect to the latter, remains to be seen.

The moment Captain Haverty approached the spot where he thought he had seen the hat that his servant pointed out to him, it gradually drew down and disappeared behind the wall, so, thinking both O'Brien and himself had been mistaken, he walked on, and in a few seconds had quite forgotten the subject. Patrick, however, who felt sure that he had not only seen a man looking over the wall, but that they were followed by some one, evidently with no good or friendly intention, failed not to keep a sharp look-out, both behind and before, in case of any sudden attack.

Carefully marking the spot where he had

seen the head, he stopped for a moment when he reached it, and, crouching down close to the wall, listened attentively for any sound that might indicate the approach or proximity of anyone on the other side. Nor had he paused many seconds when he heard a suppressed voice behind the wall, as of a man speaking to a dog to keep it quiet, and then hurry off, to get before the captain and himself again, which a sudden, sharp turn in the foot-path enabled him to do the more readily.

Patrick O'Brien lost no time in overtaking his master, who was now forty or fifty yards ahead, and acquainting him with what he had heard.

'I dare say it's someone going up the hill to hunt for rabbits,' remarked the captain, as he listened to the statement of his servant without stopping. 'In a few minutes we shall be out of this dark lane, and then we shall be able to see if anyone follows us across the open ground.'

'An' if I catch anyone following us in that thievish, hang-dog manner it's just myself that'll sarve him, or a couple either, for that matter, as I sarved that same skulking thief of a Rooshan behind the hillock

afore Sebastopoul, and pointing his rifle at yer honor, when I had the plaishir of giving him a knock on the head with the butt end o' his own gun, which I was jist in time to catch hould on, and lave him to be picked up by his comrades next morning wi' a bigger hole in his head than was convanient for any man to have who had respict for the sarvice.'

'Well, Patrick, I confess that your eyes, as well as your hands, had the advantage of me on that occasion,' replied his master, good-humouredly; 'but I don't apprehend a similar adventure here.'

In a few minutes they came to the turn in the road already alluded to, and Captain Haverty, who was again slightly in advance, all at once discovered two men, with a rough-haired dog at their heels, standing in the hedge, almost hidden by the dark shadow of some overhanging trees above them, only a few paces before him, while, at the same instant, the sound of Patrick O'Brien's voice behind him caused him to pause.

'Och, thin, if ye're an honest man—which, by my faith, I'm rather doubtful on—why don't ye come over that clay embankment of yours an' walk along by th' side o' me, if

ye're so anxious to get a look at me, instead of skulkin' behind there, an' looking at me like a thaif at a gintleman he wants to relieve of his purse.'

'What is it, Patrick?' inquired the captain in a firm voice, as his servant approached, at the same time putting a loaded revolver into his hand, which he had, perhaps more from habit than from any anticipation of requiring it, brought with him, and taking another himself, while he silently pointed to the two men and the dog, who were dimly discernible before them.

'Och, it's only a gintleman wants to ha' a look at me over the wall, becase he's too modest to come on to the foot-path and look me in the face,' replied O'Brien in a tone of affected indifference, while, at the same time, he gave a quick glance at the revolver his master had put into his hand, to see, as far as the darkness would enable him to do, if it was all ready for action; and then seemed as if he wished to take the advance from his master, that he might have the 'first brush with the inimy,' as he called it.

'No, stay behind, Patrick,' said the captain in a whisper of authority. 'If there's danger I shall be the first to meet it;' and

then, in a commanding tone, said aloud: 'Whoever you are, in front there, or whatever may be your object, I request you to come forward or to pass on.'

For a few moments there was no response or any movement made by the men, except one of them lifting his foot and giving the dog a kick, to check a low, angry growl which was beginning to issue from its apparently half-muzzled mouth as the captain spoke; but probably not liking the sharp click indicative of the cock of a pistol which accompanied his words, after a moment's hesitation they came forward, and then, without speaking, walked on before him, at first slowly and doggedly, till, gradually quickening their pace, they went off, running as fast as they could.

'Och, the cowardly spalpeens! to run off without exchanging fire in that way! Why, they were worse than the Rooshans. However, I shall know that same dog if I meet it again, at all events,' said O'Brien, as he took up the carpet-bag, which he had for the moment put down in anticipation of having other use for his hands.

'I daresay those fellows are poachers, and were in hopes that we might pass by them,'

returned the captain as he walked on, and in a few minutes began to ascend the hill, where the foot-path, gradually leaning to the left, went across the open ground, away from everything that could give shelter or concealment to anyone who might meditate an attack on our two pedestrians.

Without interruption they passed over the brow of the hill, and descended towards the vale on the opposite side. As they approached Blanche Wyndham's house Captain Haverty's heart swelled and throbbed with mingled emotions of long-cherished love and a vague kind of uneasiness which he could neither account for nor dispel. He longed to rush in and receive from her his first welcome home, and hear from her voice the first congratulation on his advancement and the honours he had achieved. The impulse was so strong that but for the presence of his servant he would scarcely have been able to resist the temptation.

Then he thought, what was she doing at that moment? Was she thinking of his expected return, which he doubted not she knew of, and wishing to see him again after his long absence, dangers, and well-won honours? Or had she forgotten all their

past affection for each other, or merely regarded it now as the foolish dream of inexperienced childhood, which the awakened knowledge of maturer judgment had no wish to see realised? He could not believe this, although the thought not only occurred to him but brought a painful presentiment of coming unhappiness with it. Somehow the apparently casual remark of his servant about the possibility of a rival having risen up in his absence left a more uneasy impression on his mind than he had hitherto experienced in his thoughts of Blanche Wyndham.

He had now reached a small gate where a narrow gravel-walk led from the foot-path through a small shrubbery and across the lawn up to the house. Everything was, as far as he was able to see, the same as when he left it, more than two years ago, and as it had been ever since he used to run about there, playing with her whose image seemed to be impressed on and to give life and interest to all around him; and could it be that she had changed while they had remained the same? or that another had, during his absence, taken his place in her heart, and among those silent objects so full of her

presence and his past happiness? No, he would not believe it; and yet he could not altogether dispel the uneasy doubts that had been excited in his mind.

Again, to go in, receive her smile of welcome, or to know the worst, came strongly upon him, and he had half mechanically laid his hand upon the gate as if to open it, for he had already paused beside it, when, probably wondering at what appeared the irritation of his master, Patrick O'Brien approached and volunteered his services to assist in doing so.

'This is not the house we are going to. My father does not live here. It is only the house of some old friend, and I was half inclined to go in and see how they all are in passing,' said the captain, recalled to himself, in a slightly embarrassed tone.

'Sure, now, an' it's mysilf that would let thim come an' welcome me first,' replied O'Brien in a tone of respectful remonstrance, which probably, being half a dozen years older than his master, to say nothing of his great attachment to him, gave him, in his own eyes, the privilege of employing. 'Sure, now, I'd let thim come first, yer honor, and welcome me; an' if they don't do

that, then bad luck to thim! they're not worth the honor o' yer honor's visit.'

'Hush, Patrick,' said the captain, checking the remarks of his servant; 'they are very dear old friends who live here, and must not be spoken of in such a way. But,' he continued, after a pause, 'you are right, so far. It is only proper that I should see my father and mother before anyone else.'

So saying, Captain Haverty was about to resume his walk toward his father's house, when the footsteps of someone walking within the shrubbery caused him to stop. Thinking it might be Mr. Wyndham, he told O'Brien he might be walking slowly on, and he would overtake him in a few minutes, and remained by the gate, waiting the approach of the person whose steps he had heard coming towards him. He knew they were those of a man; but the firm, somewhat heavy tread was hardly that of Mr. Wyndham. Still he thought he would stay and see, as, especially in case of its being anyone else, he could easily pass on without being seen.

In a few moments a bend in the gravel-walk brought the person who was approaching into sight. It was not Mr. Wyndham,

but a much larger, stronger, and apparently younger man. Overcome by some mysterious influence, Captain Haverty felt riveted to the spot, and had only power to draw himself closer into the shade of a large evergreen that overhung the wall, and completely hid him from being seen from the inside of the gate, without interfering materially with his own means of observation, when, to his astonishment, he discovered that the person before him was no other than Mr. James Murray.

Captain Haverty felt as if he could have dropped upon the ground at this discovery, and in an instant the doubts and uneasiness which had lately been excited in his mind respecting Blanche Wyndham returned upon him with tenfold force; in fact, with the most convincing certainty. And of all men, too, he thought that James Murray, the pompous, vulgar, overbearing coward! the only man he had ever known that he really despised and disliked, but whose existence he had almost forgotten—could it be possible that he was the accepted suitor of Blanche Wyndham? It was almost too much for him to believe. Yet what else could bring him there? Mr. Wyndham and

he had never been even upon visiting terms before; nor was it likely that they would have been now, but for some reason of this kind.

Unable to move, Captain Haverty stood like one paralysed, while these thoughts, quick as a flash of lightning, in a moment rushed through his mind; and, even had he had power to do so, he could not have moved away without being seen. He therefore remained perfectly still, scarcely breathing, though his heart was swelling as if it would break, thinking that if the other came out at the gate he would pass him without notice.

But it appeared it was not Mr. Murray's intention to pass through the gate, for after coming close to it, and pausing for a moment as if in deep thought, he uttered a fierce oath and returned toward the house.

'So,' he muttered between his teeth, sufficiently loud for Captain Haverty to hear—'So that infernal Irish puppy is to be home again in a few days to interfere with my plans; curse him! And that's why *she* has put me off so long, to see if he still cares anything for her before she gives me an answer; but—' here he paused, while another

fierce oath broke from his compressed lips—'but,' he repeated, turning and facing the gate again, 'I shall make her rue her trifling when she cannot help herself! Only let the mumbling priest perform his absurd ceremony, and let me once get hold of the money that her wretched old father has promised to give her, then she'll soon find out if I'm to be fooled by her silly face and bound to her apron-strings always!'

He was so near to Captain Haverty that he could hear the heavy breathing of his repressed rage. James Murray stepped nearer the gate, and then, after a moment's halt, turned once more toward the house, while he muttered to himself:

'But I will stand this no longer. I will insist upon her giving a positive answer when I come to-morrow, as her father has promised I shall have, or he will give it himself, without consulting her feelings or fancies any longer. Her feelings! as if I cared a straw what her feelings are!'

Captain Haverty heard no more. The sound as of a horse being brought round from the stables at the back of the house toward the front door roused him from the sort of stunning stupor which had, for a

moment, fallen upon his heart and nerves; and, almost maddened by what he had heard, he turned hastily away from the gate in the direction of his father's house, a little further up the valley.

CHAPTER III.

Captain Haverty walked rapidly on, and soon overtook Patrick O'Brien, who had just paused at the end of the foot-path where it joined the main road, and, without speaking, strode past towards the village, while Patrick, wondering very much at the sudden change in the manner of his master, silently followed with his carpet-bag.

At this moment the tramp of a horse's feet was heard rapidly approaching on the road behind them; and O'Brien, who was a few yards in the rear of his master, drew himself close in to the hedge to prevent being ridden over in the dark, and, seeing the absorbing excitement with which his master had passed him, called to him at the same time, just at the instant that the horseman was riding quickly by.

'Hollo!' exclaimed the equestrian, suddenly reining up his grey horse, evidently a good deal startled and alarmed at seeing one man so close to him, hiding, as he thought, against the hedge, and perceiving another only a few paces before him. 'Hollo! who are you? What is it?' he inquired, in a tone much more indicative of discretion than valour.

'Och, yer honor, I was only calling to my masther, who is a little in front there, to make room for yer worship to pass, in case he had not heard yer,' replied Patrick civilly.

Now, whether it was the conciliatory tone of Patrick O'Brien that inspired Mr. James Murray with an unusual degree of courage, and that he did not fear any retaliation from him, or that his present state of mind had the effect, we cannot say, but instead of proceeding on his way, as one might have expected, he reined his horse close in to the side of the road, and made a dash at the head of poor O'Brien with his heavy riding-whip, which the latter, fortunately for himself, avoided.

'I'll teach you to set up your Irish howling to frighten my horse when I'm riding

past,' said Mr. Murray, with a coarse oath, as he made a second lash with his whip, which O'Brien also avoided.

'I didn't mane to frighten either yer honor or yer horse,' replied Patrick; 'but I tell ye what, if it's fightin' ye want, I'm just the lad that knows a little of that same; so be aisy now, and don't be afther strikin' at me with that whip o' yours, or I may take the trouble o' pullin' ye off yer horse an' lavin' the mark o' my knuckles on that ill-favoured face o' yours to carry home wid ye.'

'What, you Irish scoundrel! Will you dare to threaten me—a gentleman and a magistrate! You idle vagabond! I shall have you sent to the treadmill!' cried Mr. James Murray in a fierce, bullying tone.

'I beg yer honor's pardon,' returned Patrick in a half-submissive, half-taunting tone; 'I would rather be excused o' that same; an' if yer honor's a magistrate, as ye say, ye ought to know the law better thin to threaten to send a man to the thridmill for defendin' himself from the inimy when he's attacked.'

'Curse your Irish brogue!' cried Mr. Murray, making another swinge with his whip, this time striking O'Brien a sharp

blow across the face and shoulders, at the same moment spurring his horse to get out of his reach before he could carry his hint about pulling him from his horse into execution. Patrick, however, was too quick for him, and seizing the rein with one hand, with the other he snatched the whip from its owner and laid it about his shoulders and back with an energy and force which made the big, insolent coward shriek with pain, rage, and terror.

'There! that's the way we administer the law in the good ould counthry when people aren't civil and don't behave dacent,' said the Irishman, pausing, with a sarcastic sneer.

'Hollo, Patrick! what's the matter?' asked his master, hastening back; the noise of the fray and the cries of Mr. James Murray having suddenly attracted his attention from his own absorbing thoughts.

'Plaise, yer honor,' replied O'Brien, 'it's only this gintleman and I settlin' a disputed point o' law between us, that's all. He says he's a magistrate, and doesn't know that it's agin the law to attack a paiceable man on the Queen's highway road; an' I've jist taken the liberty o' provin' he's wrong, yer honor, that's all.'

Without stopping to inquire further into the matter, Captain Haverty felt convinced in his own mind that his servant was not the aggressor; but he was unwilling to create any disturbance on his return home, though few things at that moment would have given him greater satisfaction than to have taken the whip out of O'Brien's hand and applied it to Mr. Murray's back. He however desired his servant to give up the whip to its owner, and let him go, trying, at the same time, to avoid being recognised by that gentleman, who in a domineering tone demanded his name and address, saying that he would hold the master responsible for the attack made upon him by his servant.

'If you had not first attacked my servant he would not have attacked you,' replied Captain Haverty, with difficulty repressing his wrath. 'My name and address are always at the command of everyone who has any right to demand them, but as I neither recognise your right nor believe my servant has done anything more than I should have done myself had I been in his place, I beg at once to say you shall not have them.'

'You won't? then I shall follow you till I see where you go, and then fetch a policeman

and give you both into custody. I'll let you know what it is to commit an assault on a gentleman bearing her Majesty's commission of the peace on the public thoroughfare,' returned the magistrate.

Captain Haverty required all his self-command to restrain his indignation, which contempt for the person before him, and his desire to remain unrecognised, alone enabled him to do.

'Now, sir, if you take my advice, you'll be gone,' said he in a cool, firm voice, which the other did not relish over much, for, finding his horse free, he gave it a sharp spur with his heels, and in another moment was out of their reach, swearing with many a fierce oath, as soon as he was at a safe distance, that he would send the police to discover them the next day, and have them both taken up for assault and highway-robbery on the person of one of her Majesty's magistrates.

Now this incident, though far from being agreeable in itself, gave a turn to the thoughts of Captain Haverty, which was rather a relief than otherwise, diverting, for the time at least, his mind from the more painful subject which had occupied it, and

even, in some degree, lessened the despondency that had a few minutes before fallen upon him.

Resuming his walk, he muttered to himself, with a feeling of inward satisfaction and contempt:

'And this is the wretched cur that would marry Blanche Wyndham, and of whom, it seems, her parents approve! By heaven, if I thought she gave any encouragement to such a hound, she should have him for me! But I cannot believe it; Blanche Wyndham never could have become so untrue to her own nature as this. No, no; the delay he complains of is a proof of her unwillingness and aversion to him. She is still true to me. If she has not forgotten the happiness of our past days, and still loves me, not all the villainy of that man, nor all the injustice of her parents, shall force her into a marriage contrary to her own wishes and affections! To-morrow I shall know more of this; now let me hide these thoughts within my own breast, and meet my father and mother with an unclouded face.'

Thus mused William Haverty as he approached the door of his parents' house on his return home from the Crimea. And oh,

how many young, brave, and hopeful as himself had left their homes with him, and never more returned to gladden the hearts of their beloved and loving ones! whose bones are now bleaching in the sun or crumbling beneath the ruined walls and covered trenches of that terrible fortress, which cost England so much suffering, treasure, and blood, and filled the homes of thousands of British families with lamentation and grief!

CHAPTER IV.

Both Colonel Haverty and his wife had been anxiously and daily looking for the return of their son; and had almost given up the hope of seeing him for that day. They were therefore agreeably surprised when they heard a knock at the door—for it was always locked after dark—which they instinctively and in a moment knew was his, and, before the servant had time to reach the hall, the colonel had snatched up a candle, sprung to his feet with an exclamation of joy, and, closely followed by his wife, had unlocked the door, admitted his son, and embraced him in the transport of his happiness, shouting with all the fervour of glad surprise:

'God Almighty be praised for bringing you safe back to your poor old parents, my son!' and the next moment handed him over

to his agitated, trembling mother, whose gentle heart was too full of happiness to give utterance to more than a few broken words of joyful surprise, as she threw herself into the open arms of her beloved son, and, supported on his manly breast, gave expression to her feelings in tears.

As soon as the first welcoming embrace was over, the colonel and his wife, one on each side of him, led their son into the room where they had been sitting, and where a large family Bible and a prayer-book were lying on the table, indicative of the sacred occupation in which they had been employed when he came to the door; leaving the servant, who had now made her appearance, to close the door and show Patrick O'Brien, who had remained outside in the porch, into the kitchen, where he soon made himself quite at home, and became a great favourite with the cook and housemaid. While the captain, in the joy of meeting his beloved parents, in an instant forgot all the painful thoughts and emotions which had so recently agitated his bosom with respect to Blanche Wyndham.

After all the dangers, privations, and sufferings he had undergone, who can tell

the joy of William Haverty's fondly affectionate parents as they saw their beloved son once more safe under their own roof? There is something so sacred and so mysterious in the love of parents for their children that it makes one almost afraid to venture upon any description of it. Next to that still more powerful and still more sacred and mysterious love which God has for His children, the love of a parent is, perhaps, the most wonderful thing in existence. What anxious, prayerful nights and days Colonel Haverty and his affectionate wife had spent on account of that son who now stood before them, or rather between them, with one arm supporting his dear old mother and the other in the grasp of the only hand of his white-haired, proudly-excited father; the whole forming one of the most beautifully touching scenes that could well be imagined.

Conscious of our inability to do justice to it, we will not attempt to fill up the picture, but leave the reader to do so for himself.

Mrs. Haverty was a quiet, homely, woman-hearted old lady, whose whole soul was devoted to her husband, her children, and her God; for both she and her husband had the strongest religious feelings and convictions,

which they had carefully endeavoured to instil into the hearts of their children. Nor had their efforts been in vain, for not only their now married daughters, but their son likewise, had ever evinced the most sincere interest in and attachment to their religious duties.

Colonel Haverty, though nearly seventy years of age, was still full of the vivacity, good-humour, and gallantry which form such prominent features in the characteristics of his countrymen; and which were all the more developed in him by the noble profession of which he was a member, and the stirring incidents of his early life. His natural good temper, inherent flow of high spirits, and generosity of disposition were inexhaustible, though the whole were refined and controlled by an innate delicacy of feeling and gentlemanly deportment, and marked and elevated by an earnest spirit of religious fervour, true piety, and Christian charity, which gave a still higher tone to his character.

Captain Haverty, though still a little pale and thinner than usual, from his late privations and wounds, was yet in sufficient health and strength to relieve any anxiety his

parents might still have on his account. A couple or three inches taller than his father, he stood between him and his mother one of the most perfect specimens of manly vigour and filial tenderness that an admiring parent ever looked upon; while the open, generous expression of his countenance was rendered all the more interesting by a slight scar, the remains of a sword-cut, upon his forehead, over his left eyebrow; and his military air and bearing were all the more distinctly marked by the dark moustache upon his upper lip, and the bright shining medal of the Victoria Cross, and a couple or three clasps suspended on the front of his full, well-formed chest.

Well might his parents have been proud and happy in such a son; and well might a son have been proud and happy in such parents.

The moment the first embrace was over, the mother's few next thoughts were to provide some refreshment for her son.

'Now, William, my dear, what will you have to eat?' she inquired affectionately. 'You must be both cold and hungry.'

'If you have a mutton-chop in the house, I should like that and a cup of tea as well as

anything, I think,' replied the son. 'My walk from the station has warmed me pretty well, and I am just hungry enough to enjoy a nice chop and a cup of tea.'

'Then you shall have them immediately,' rejoined Mrs. Haverty, ringing the bell and ordering the servant, who at the same moment entered the room, to desire the cook to prepare a chop and tea as quickly as possible.

'But you haven't walked all the way from the station, have you?' inquired the colonel, while his wife was giving the above instructions to the servant.

'Yes, father; I didn't find it too much. I was so very cold when we arrived at the station, and stiff sitting so long in the railway-carriage, that I thought the walk would do me more good than riding in one of those rickety old flys; so I left my traps, desiring the stationmaster to send them after me, and came on, bringing merely a carpet-bag with me, which my servant, Patrick O'Brien, carried in his hand.'

'You don't mean to tell me that your servant is a countryman of mine!' cried the colonel gaily.

'Yes; I picked him up at Alma, where

he was wandering about without a master, his last having been killed at that place, and has been with me ever since, and a more faithful or better servant I don't think any man ever had.'

'Send him out a glass of whisky, my dear, to drink while something else is being got ready for him,' said the colonel, addressing his wife, who took out a bottle from the cellaret of the sideboard, filled a wine-glass with whisky, and sent it out by the servant.

'It was he, I suppose, who attended so well to you after you received your wounds,' remarked Mrs. Haverty kindly.

'Yes; and a better or more careful and attentive nurse never entered a sick-room. And I certainly think I should have lost my life on another occasion but for his courage and presence of mind in striking down a skulking villain of a Russian, who was taking aim at me with his rifle from behind a mound, which hid him from my observation.'

'God bless him!' exclaimed the colonel warmly. 'He shall have another glass of whisky for that.'

'Well, one, I think, will be enough for him just at present, father,' replied the captain, who with the English blood of his mother

perhaps inherited a little of its proverbial caution. 'I don't know that he would take more than what is necessary if it were even offered to him. I have always found him remarkably steady, and never once saw him in the slightest degree intoxicated; nor ever found him help himself to either wine or spirits when he often enough might have done so; but at least till he has had something to eat, I think it better not to give him more than one glass, for I have not forgotten either the strength of your whisky or the size of mother's wine-glasses.'

'So that's the new badge of honour—the Victoria Cross,' said the colonel, taking hold of the massive gold medal suspended from the breast of his son, and examining it as he spoke with the proud eye of a father and the interest of a gallant old soldier. It is a handsome-looking thing, and the first I have seen. I heard they were to be distributed about the time you expected to reach London, and was in hopes you would get yours, as you had told us you expected to receive one while you were there.'

'Yes; I was the first who had the honour of receiving one,' replied Captain Haverty, 'and I confess, proud though I felt at having

such a distinction conferred upon me by the hands of our noble-hearted queen, not the least part of my happiness was in the thought of the pleasure I should have in showing it to you and my mother.'

'Isn't it a handsome thing, my dear?' said the colonel, handing the decoration to his wife with a look of the most tender affection at his aged partner, mingled with pride and love for his son.

'Yes, it is indeed,' replied Mrs. Haverty, with a look of much interest at the medal; adding, with the true instincts of a mother: 'But it was very near too dearly bought.'

'Well, I certainly have not received it without having encountered some danger, though, if my duty had not led me to do so, the mere wish to gain the medal, however honourable its possession might be, would never have done it,' said the son, with an affectionate glance at his mother.

'God grant that you may long be preserved to wear it, and that you may never again have to encounter similar dangers, my son,' said the mother tenderly, as she refastened the medal on the breast of his coat.

'At any rate, I hope we shall be better prepared for them if ever we are again, and

have better men at the head of both our government and army than we have had in this war,' returned the colonel. 'But here comes your tea and chop; take them while they are hot. We can talk afterwards.'

'Oh, I can eat and talk at the same time,' said the captain, 'and shall enjoy them all the more that you and mother are going to sit with me,' he added, as he turned to the table and saw that the cups and saucers were placed for them also.

'Well, we all dined early to-day; I thought we might just as well have our tea at the same time, and I knew you would like yours all the better if we had,' replied Mrs. Haverty.

'Ay, that I shall,' said the son warmly. 'So you have heard of our frightful sufferings and the terrible mismanagement of our affairs in the Crimea?' he remarked as they sat down to the table.

'Yes, that we did,' replied the colonel fervidly; 'and often has my heart bled to read and hear the appalling accounts that came of the awful privations and sufferings endured by our brave soldiers, nearly the whole of which might have been avoided with better

ministers at home and abler generals at the head of our army.'

'Well, certainly the mismanagement at home was the most flagrantly culpable that ever disgraced a ministry, and nearly ruined as fine an army of British soldiers as ever walked the earth; and for a long time it almost looked as if we had been merely sent out to perish by want and neglect, without any of the necessary provisions being made by the government for our maintenance, to say nothing of our comforts. But better leaders than some, at least of those we had, no army could have desired,' said the captain ardently.

'Well, I always thought that a great many of the censures that were made respecting poor Lord Raglan's want of competency were unjust. Perhaps his age might have been against him; but I knew him in the Peninsula and was with him at the storming of Badajos and the battles of Vittoria and Salamanca, and I could never believe that the lion-hearted yet judicious leader of those days could have degenerated into the imbecile bungler that he was represented to be in the Crimea.'

'Nor were you mistaken. Had Lord

Raglan not been hampered and held back by the want of support and unanimity of action on the part of our government and the leaders of our allies, the campaign would have been very different. Had St. Arnaud, gallant and noble soldier though he was, acted as Lord Raglan wished, and as Sir Colin Campbell, your own old brother-in-arms and my own gallant commander, urged, we should have entered Sebastopol immediately after the battle of the Alma. But Lord Raglan, as I have said, and we all knew it, was so hampered and held back by the want of proper support and unanimity of action—the latter of which is always consequent upon a divided command—that he could neither act upon his own plans nor those of his generals under him. The noble-hearted, gallant old man certainly died as much from grief at seeing so devoted and brave an army sacrificed and rendered powerless by the imbecility or obstinate stupidity of the home government, and the difference of opinion—not from any want of courage on the part of either their generals or men, but simply from the divergence of opinions and plans on the part of the French—as from any other cause. A braver, more devoted soldier than Lord

Raglan never lived; and many a general with not half his abilities, but with more judicious assistance from his country, has been looked upon as a great commander by his men and a great conqueror by the world.'

'I am glad to hear you say that of my old leader,' said the colonel, 'for I have always regarded him as a most able and gallant soldier, as well as one of the most kind-hearted and generous of men I ever knew. And what a pity Sir Colin Campbell or some other really tried, experienced man was not appointed to the command at his death. For it was very much doubted by military men of tried ability, and many officers who had had great experience under the Duke of Wellington, whether Lord Raglan's successors had been accustomed to command any large number of men, such as were engaged in the Crimea, as well as being competent for leading a British army, and carrying on the siege of such a fortress as Sebastopol, and against men of such experience as Gortschakoff and others of eminence in the Russian ranks.

'It was certainly either a great mistake or a most disgraceful piece of favouritism on

the part of our government to have placed such men over such an army, in which so many really competent men were to be found,' replied Captain Haverty; 'and great was the surprise and disappointment in the army, on the death of Lord Raglan, when it was found that such men as Sir Colin Campbell and De Lacy Evans had been overlooked, and others placed in command who were comparatively untried and less qualified for such important duties. But, thank God, it is all over now; only I hope the next time we go to war we shall have better and true men in the government, and then we shall have abler generals to command.'

'I trust we shall never have any more war to require them,' said Mrs. Haverty earnestly.

'Well, I hope so too, mother,' returned her son; 'only I am afraid it is a hope not likely to be realised on this side of the millennium, at least, for while there are in all communities bad and lawless men who can only be kept in check by policemen and prisons, there will, I fear, be always despotic and ambitious rulers who, not content with tyrannising over their own subjects,

will try to encroach on the rights and liberties of other nations.'

'It is an awful thing,' said the colonel, with something like a shudder, 'to see two great armies of brave, gallant, and mortal men standing up, full of life, energy, and power, ready to rush forward at the bidding of a fellow-man, whose only quality is too often the gratification of his own petty vanity or sinful ambition; and still more awful—horribly awful—is it to see them, amid the deafening roar of cannon and the rattle of musketry, slashing and hacking at each other like fiends, with the shattered limbs, mangled and distorted bodies of their companions and friends—late so buoyant with health, hope, and strength—lying scattered around them, and their warm blood soaking into the earth, or standing in red, reeking pools beneath the trampling feet of the contending armies! Oh! when I have seen this, and thought of it afterwards—for it is only afterwards, when the maddening thrill of the struggle is over, that one really and fully feels this—during the time the conflict is going on, the mind is too much occupied and excited to think of anything but how to defeat the enemy and achieve the victory; but after all this is over

and one stands calmly and silently among the heaps of his dead mangled and wounded comrades, it gives a chill to the heart and shows us what an awful responsibility a nation incurs that provokes a war, and what a fearful thing a battle is! Perhaps I think of it more now than I did when I was younger, but I cannot look back upon many of the scenes I have witnessed without a deep feeling of the most intense horror, and, but for the inward knowledge and conviction that the cause in which I and our armies were engaged was the cause of freedom, justice, and humanity, as well as that of our own country, I should feel that I had been engaged in one of the most appalling human butcheries that ever took place on the face of the earth. But thanks be to God for not only giving us the victory over our enemies, but for giving us a good cause to fight for!'

There was a fervid earnestness in the colonel's tone and manner as he said this.

'But the crime of war—when it is a crime—rests rather with the originators than the instruments, don't you think?' said the son, after a moment's silence.

'Yes, a soldier's first duty is to obey his king—or queen, as in our case, bless her noble

heart! and his next to do it conscientiously and with as little personal injury to even his enemies as he consistently can with its due execution and efficient performance,' replied the colonel.

'Well, the instigator of the Russian war has been called to his account sooner than he calculated upon, at all events,' rejoined the son.

'Ay, and a fearful account he will have had to answer! A more gratuitous, unnecessary and wicked war was never provoked by any man than the late Crimean war. And yet, cunning, mendacious, fierce aggressor though he was, I cannot but wish that he had had more time to atone for his crimes and prepare for the judgment he has been called to. May the Lord have mercy on his soul, as well as on the souls of the thousands he has been the cruel cause of sending into eternity! And yet, if he had not died, perhaps the war would not have been over now, as, thanks be to God, it is.'

'I doubt if it would,' said the son; 'and apart from the bloodshed and suffering consequent on war—which of course ought always to be the first consideration—but except for this I could have wished that, as we were at

it, it had lasted a little longer. I mean for the credit of our country and the honour of armies.'

'Then you think you would have stood another campaign better, do you?'

'Better! Yes, fifty times. We were just beginning to get into something like order, when the sudden peace came and prevented us from employing the immense power and resources we had at length collected, as well as hindered our army from showing what it could do. The disorganisation and distress which for a long time had prevailed, owing to the utter mismanagement and want of foresight on the part of the government, had been pretty well overcome, and we had at last as fine an army as ever entered a battle-field, and, however incompetent the commander-in-chief, one or two as fine fellows under him as ever led an army or a division of one; and, depend upon it, we should very soon have shown the world that the British army was still worthy of its ancient fame, and could still conquer any enemy that dared to encounter it. I believe there was not a man in the Crimea—from even Codrington himself (who, as you are aware, was our last commander), down to the youngest drummer-

boy—who did not long for another campaign against the Russians, and regret the peace which restrained them in the very moment of their fitness and confidence of future triumphs. The only thing was that the French were almost exhausted, and, without great exertions on the part of their emperor, they could hardly have continued the war. But we were just getting into a proper state to let both our allies and our enemies see, and feel too, what we really could do; so we must be content with the small share of the glory that has fallen to us, and the confidence of what we could have done had we had further opportunity, and thank God that it is all over.'

'I wonder what the old duke would have said had he been alive?' said the colonel, half musingly.

'Ay, if we had had such a man to command us, you would have seen what we could do,' said the captain ardently. 'For though we had two or three of his pupils, even those who had any ability or experience were so hampered and held back by the want of support from home, or the difference of opinion on the part of our allies, that they could not do what they would have done.

Whereas he would not only have had far greater ability and experience, but would have compelled the government at home to act with greater discretion and justice, as well as had more influence over the plans and arrangements of the French generals.'

'Ay, if Lord Raglan had only had the talents of his old master, how different it would have been with you!'

'Yes, or had he even been allowed to exercise the talents he possessed, it would have been very different, for though of course neither he nor any other man in the army is to be compared to the Duke of Wellington, yet the pupil was not unworthy of his teacher; and a more generous, warm-hearted, kind, and considerate man for others, never lived than Lord Raglan. The army would have done anything for him, and looked upon him almost as a friend and father as much as a leader,' said the captain with enthusiastic respect.

'Ay, he was a glorious fellow!' said the colonel warmly. 'And how it must have torn his noble heart to find his energies wasted, and his gallant army suffering as it did from the grievous mismanagement, if not disloyal supineness, of those who ought

to have supported him with all the resources of the country from the very first; and then the folly of appointing his successor.'

'Yes, that was generally admitted to be a most unfortunate piece of business. But were not one or both of them Wellington's pupils?'

'Yes, I believe so; but you know there's many a great master who has had pupils whose heads were as thick, and whose understanding was so weak, that it was utterly impossible to either hammer anything into the one or to bring anything out of the other; and I believe, had the duke been asked his opinion, that is just what he would have said. There is not the slightest doubt that it was a great error in judgment, if not something worse, in not appointing that gallant old officer Sir Colin Campbell, to succeed Lord Raglan. It was a grievous mistake, if not great injustice, committed by the Horse Guards. Oh, it was a most unpardonable piece of injustice! May God forgive them, whoever they were, that so wickedly imperilled the safety and honour of our country, our army, and queen; but I cannot!' said the colonel, almost fiercely.

'Now, my dear, you must not get excited;

you know you can't stand it,' said Mrs. Haverty in a quiet, soothing voice to her husband.

'Oh, my dear,' returned the colonel, with an affectionate smile, 'you know I am an Irishman as well as an old soldier! The former perhaps makes me a trifle more violent than I should be at times, and renders it hard for me to look at what is wrong with composure; and the latter makes me too keenly alive to the honour of our army as well as the security of our country, to see it imperilled without indignation and grief.'

'And how are all our old friends in the neighbourhood?' inquired Captain Haverty, after a short pause, during which the servant cleared the table of the tea-things.

'Oh, very well, I believe,' said Mrs. Haverty quietly.

'And the Wyndhams?' continued the son.

'I believe they are all well,' said the mother, glancing uneasily at her husband; 'but we don't see them quite so much as we used to do before you left Bilford.'

'Indeed!' returned the son, trying to conceal his own uneasiness: 'there hasn't been any disagreement between you and them, I hope?'

'Oh no, not exactly—only, you know, we are getting old, and don't care about going out much now: and then, we were so anxious about you, while you were at the Crimea, that we cared still less for going out, or seeing anybody,' replied Mrs. Haverty, who evidently had something on her mind that she shrank from communicating to her son.

'But I should have thought, as they used to be such intimate friends, you would rather have liked to have had them to chat to and to cheer you in your anxiety,' remarked the son, afraid to look his mother in the face.

'Ah, my dear son, there is only one Friend to support and cheer us when we really want comfort, and He is always the same.'

There was a short pause, during which each of the three seemed to shrink from meeting the eye of the other.

'I suppose some of the young ladies in the neighbourhood, that I left looking out for husbands, have got them before this?' said the captain at length, breaking the embarrassing silence.

'Well, one or two I think have,' replied the mother.

'My old sweetheart, Miss Wyndham—

Blanche, I mean,' said the captain, with feigned composure, 'is not among the number, is she?'

'No,' replied Mrs. Haverty, with another uneasy glance at her husband; 'but they say, though I don't know whether it is true or not—but they say she is to be married before long.'

'Indeed! but I hope—I mean—you say you don't know whether it is true or not?' returned the son, with ill-repressed embarrassment and anxiety.

'No one can ever tell about those matters, you know; as reports of the kind are so often without any foundation,' rejoined the old lady, evasively.

'Then you don't think it is true?'

'Well, your father and I hardly know what to think. The Wyndhams have never mentioned the subject to us, nor we to them.'

'I wonder at that, knowing how much—I mean, how intimate you all used to be,' said the captain, with increasing uneasiness; inquiring, after a moment's pause: 'And to whom does report say it is to be? I hope some one more—I mean, really worthy—of such—of her.'

'Well, you can't always believe what

people say; but we've heard it is to be Mr. James Murray of Glemham Hall, who I dare say you've met or heard of before.'

'Oh yes, I remember him, and a more vulgar, pompous blockhead, or a more boasting coward, is not to be found in the county. Nor are these his worst faults, I believe,' replied the son, with mingled bitterness and contempt. 'But surely Blanche Wyndham can never be going to marry such a fellow as that! He must be almost twice her age, too!'

'Well, I don't know, but people say so; and it is thought to be a great match for her. For, though the Wyndhams are said to be wealthy and are a highly respectable family, they never have been—in fact, they never appeared to care about being taken up by the aristocratic people; and this Mr. James Murray is both a magistrate and belonging to one of the oldest families in the county, as well as the owner of a very grand house and large estates,' said Mrs. Haverty.

'Well, William, to tell you the truth, we once met the fellow when we called there; and I saw enough to make me suspect his object,' said the colonel, quietly; 'and we were neither of us at all pleased with him.

My opinion of him pretty much agrees with your own, though I was not aware you knew so much about him.'

'Well, I don't know very much about him; only I do not like the little I do know,' replied William, evasively; 'and I doubt very much if it would be such a great match for Blanche Wyndham as people seem to think: I have some suspicions on that point. But even if it were, I should have thought differently of her than to suppose that considerations of this kind would have swayed her heart and feelings, for I cannot believe that she can either esteem or love such a man as James Murray.'

'Well, his personal appearance, certainly, is not likely to induce young ladies to fall in love with him: otherwise they are much easier pleased than they were when I was a young man,' said the colonel, with a sly, affectionate look at his wife.

'Ah, there are not many of them so fortunate as to get hold of such a good, dear, handsome young fellow as you were,' Mrs. Haverty replied, returning with quiet pride the affectionate glance of her husband.

'Well,' said the colonel, resuming the conversation with his son, 'I confess I am

rather puzzled to make out what Blanche Wyndham can see in that James Murray, unless it is his supposed wealth and position in the county. Besides, William, I always had an idea that you and she would make a match of it one of these days,' he added with rather a forced smile, glancing at his son.

'Oh, you know, father, it wouldn't do for me to marry at present,' replied the son, with a good deal of confusion in his look; adding, with something like disappointment in his tone: 'besides, if I even were disposed to marry anyone, very few young ladies, I'm afraid, would be inclined to have me with my small prospects and little beyond my pay to live upon.'

'You don't give the ladies much credit for disinterestedness then, William,' said the mother, with a grave smile.

'I believe there are many ladies who would sacrifice any worldly prospects and comforts, yea, their very lives, were it necessary, for those they love. I could not be so unjust to the sex that has my own generous, noble-hearted mother among it as to say or believe otherwise,' returned the captain, with an affectionate look at his mother. 'But I

believe they are the exception rather than the rule.'

'Then you don't think Blanche Wyndham is one of the exceptions?'

'Well, according to appearances, if she is really going to marry this man, I can hardly think her one,' rejoined the son. 'Only it may not be true, after all,' he added, after a moment's hesitating pause, as if his heart smote him for giving utterance to anything so unfavourable to the mind and heart of his old sweetheart.

'I can scarcely believe it, William,' replied his mother; 'and I am rather afraid that her father has much more to do with the match than she has herself. He was always a very close man and fond of his money, and as this Mr. Murray is thought to be wealthy and has, I believe, a very fine estate, I strongly suspect that the old man is at the bottom of it.'

'Well, from what I heard this—I mean, from what you have told me, I strongly suspect so too,' said the son, with some embarrassment. 'But it is a most cruel piece of business to force his daughter to marry a fellow she cannot have the slightest affection or respect for, simply because he is supposed

to be rich, which from something I heard—I mean I once heard—I have strong suspicion he is very far from being; and I feel quite sure that, with all her attractions and virtues, which he is utterly incapable of either appreciating or caring for, as Blanche Wyndham's father is well-known to be a man of considerable property, her fortune is the only thing he cares one straw about.'

'Come, my boy, we must not judge too harshly. Let us be a little charitable, and give him the credit of having some good qualities, though we may be ignorant of them.'

'For Blanche Wyndham's sake I heartily wish he may have.'

'I suppose you will call upon them—the Wyndhams I mean—to-morrow, to let them know of your return?' said the old lady, after a short pause.

'I scarcely know, mother. Perhaps they may not care about seeing me now their daughter is to be married into one of the great county families,' he replied, with a slight sneer in his tone. 'Besides, if they have not been so attentive to you of late they don't deserve it,' he added rather proudly.

'Oh, that has been entirely our own fault,

William,' replied the mother soothingly. 'It is rather we who have been less attentive to them than they to us. But, to tell you the truth, neither your father nor I liked this Mr. Murray, who always seemed such a pompous, rude sort of man, and was so much there that we have not gone so often to their house as we used to do; and, unless I am much mistaken, there is at least one there who will still be glad to see you, and whom it may save from much future unhappiness if you go. Poor Blanche has neither looked so well nor so cheerful as she used to do for a long time back, and, unless I am greatly deceived, this projected marriage of hers is the cause of it.'

'Why doesn't she refuse to marry the man if she dislikes him?' returned the son somewhat sternly.

'Oh, my dear boy, you don't know what it is for a daughter to resist or disobey the wishes of her parents, and how difficult it is for her to incur the terrible responsibility of doing so. I know she was much attached to you, and believe she is so still, but how does she know that you still regard her with any affection? I have always loved her, and believe her to be a good, dutiful, and affection-

ate girl ; and her very gentleness and sense of duty to her parents may be the only cause of her compliance with their wishes in marrying this Mr. Murray, if she really is to do so, which, as I have said, we don't know for certain—only that it is reported she is.'

'Well, we will talk the matter over in the morning, mother,' said her son, with feigned indifference, and, complaining of being a little tired, wished his parents good-night and retired to his own room, where a good fire had already been kindled for him.

CHAPTER V.

When Captain Haverty retired to his bedroom it was not to seek sleep; it was rather to try to compose the agitation of his mind by silent reflection with himself than to find repose for his body. The whole conversation relating to Blanche Wyndham had been a most severe test to his feelings and powers of self-restraint. Several times his agitation almost betrayed him, and at last it became so great that he was forced to leave the sitting-room and seek his own chamber to conceal his emotion from his parents.

The last words from his mother fully confirmed his own suspicions with regard to the projected marriage of Blanche Wyndham. He felt perfectly convinced that such a union could neither be of her own choice nor in accordance with her own feelings. But what

was he to do? Most probably the matter had already gone so far that she could not break it off, even if he had sufficient influence over her feelings to make her wish it. Again, why should he suppose that she would wish to break it off for his sake? Might not the regard which he believed she once entertained for him have become cold and obliterated during his absence? Might not this same James Murray possess more merits in her eyes than he supposed? And what right had he to try to turn her from the marriage? Or, was it possible that she still retained any of her old regard for him, and was yielding to the suit of another simply in obedience to the wishes of her parents, as his mother had suggested? Perhaps, too, uncertain of his real feelings toward her, might she not suppose that his sentiments toward her had become changed; and if he refrained from calling upon her would it not assure her of this? Of course it would. But then, with the recollection of past days upon him and the knowledge of what he had already seen and heard since he came home, how was he to meet her? If it really was true that she was soon to become another's, how could he look upon that face, clasp that hand, and listen to

that voice when the heart that throbbed within her was changed?

But could it really be so? No! he could not and would not believe it unless he had it from her own lips. He would see her and hear it from herself, and then, if it was so! farewell to all his young dreams of cherished happiness! and farewell to the one bright star that had spurred him on in the paths of honour, that had sustained him in every trial, that had cheered him in every despondency, and given life and energy to his heart in pain and sickness! Yes, if she was changed then farewell to this and every other bright vision of his life and future happiness!

At the thought of this William Haverty bent his head upon his knees and covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud. But the pang, though bitter, was only momentary. Raising himself from his despondency he endeavoured to take a more hopeful view of the matter, and resolved at least to wait till he had seen her before he tried to strangle the affection he had so long cherished toward her in his heart.

Then he tried to think of something else. He glanced around his old familiar room, which carried his mind back almost as far as

he had any recollection. Everything was the same as when he had last been in it, nearly three years ago, shortly before he joined his regiment to go to the Crimea. Scarcely an article seemed to have been touched, save to dust or wash it. The whole room looked just as if he had only left it the day before, and now returned to it again after a few hours' absence.

But what vicissitudes, privations, and dangers had he not seen, endured, and encountered since he last saw it! and yet everything here seemed to have remained unaffected by time or change. The chairs, the bed, the curtains, the ornaments on the chimney-piece, his slippers by the side of the fireplace, the dressing-table and looking-glass, the wash-stand—they were all there, and had been all affectionately taken care of and preserved by his fond mother as endearing relics of her beloved son.

Nor was Captain Haverty unappreciative of the tender devotion of that mother who had so carefully retained these memorials of himself. He loved her too much for that; and a heart much less sensitively affectionate than his might have been touched by such eloquent witnesses of a mother's sympathy

and love. How grateful he felt, too, after all he had suffered and gone through, to be permitted once again to visit, in comparative health and strength, the home of his childhood, and to find his beloved parents still alive, in health and vigour, to welcome him. He had indeed much, very much, to be grateful for—ay, and for which he was deeply and truly grateful.

Kneeling by his bedside, he poured out his deep, earnest thanks to Him who had been so good and gracious to them and himself; and prayed long and earnest thanks that He who had hitherto preserved him amid so many great dangers would still continue to do so, and to bless both his parents and himself, and that He would give him patience and resignation under any disappointments or trials to his feelings that might be in store for him.

He rose from his knees calmer, more hopeful, and lighter at heart than he had been since his return. It was however long before he went to bed, having no inclination to sleep, and sat musing in front of the fire long after he had heard his father and mother go upstairs, and after pausing for a moment outside his door—during which he could hear

a slight whisper and then a low, but fervent, 'God bless him' breathed from each of their lips—pass on to their own room.

Again in the silence of his quiet chamber and the stillness of night his thoughts reverted to Blanche Wyndham, though with much less bitterness of heart and despondency of hope than before. His mind dwelt rather on her as she was when he last left her than as she might now have become. He recalled to mind the happy days of their childhood and youth, when they had neither doubts, fears, nor anxieties, to trouble or disturb their felicity. He thought of her as the bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked girl, with the dishevelled ringlets waving round her small, well-formed neck and snowy shoulders, and her merry laugh ringing in his ears was like the glad voice of an angel; and then he thought of her as the idol of his more adolescent years, the beautiful, accomplished, gentle, intelligent young girl just rising into womanhood, as she was when he last saw her; of all the happiness he had felt and hoped for in her society, of their last tender parting, and of the many bright hours the remembrance of that parting had given him while sitting in his comfortless tent in the

far-off Crimea, standing in the cold wet trenches before Sebastopol, or lying on his weary couch in the hospital of Balaclava—and now was he to resign this at the very moment when he had hoped to realise the happiness he had so long anticipated? No, he would not.

What he had heard of Blanche Wyndham's going to be married to another must be a mistake. His own heart told him so, and that could not deceive him. He would see her again and renew the felicitous communion that had so long existed between them; and even if her parents had been trying to force her into a marriage against her own wishes while he was away, as it had not yet taken place, now that he was returned, and with such honourable distinction too, they could not attempt to give their daughter to another if she still really loved him. And they should not if he could prevent it.

With such thoughts passing through his mind, now chasing each other like clouds in a windy sky, now tumbling and tossing each other like the surf upon the seashore in a stormy day, and now falling softly and soothingly upon his heart, like a gentle breeze upon a fevered forehead, William Haverty

sat musing before the decaying bedroom-fire till long after midnight.

At length he rose, undressed, and laid himself down to sleep, which gradually and gently came upon him, and he awoke in the morning soothed, refreshed, and inspirited, resolved to call at Bilford Hall as soon after breakfast as politeness and the usages of society would admit.

CHAPTER VI.

Soon after breakfast, Captain Haverty and his father went out for a short walk in the garden, which, although it was now very near the close of the year, owing to the mildness of the climate and the shelteredness of the position, still retained many traces of its summer beauty.

Colonel Haverty's residence was in its style neither English, Italian, nor Swiss, but a kind of mongrel mixture of all three, surrounded by garden, small shrubbery, and lawn, the latter being in front of the house, and having three or four pine and yew trees upon it, which in summer gave a pleasant, cool appearance to the whole. There was a short, gravelled carriage-way, entered by a wooden gate, painted green, leading from the road up to the front of the house, which it

approached with circular bend, and then passed off at the opposite side, where it led to the now-unused coach-house and stabling, which were behind, and almost hidden from view by a thick high screen of leafy evergreens.

The morning was bright, clear, and dry: just one of those mornings that gives life, tone, and vigour to the body, as well as animation and cheerfulness to the spirits; especially to one who has lately been an invalid. William Haverty felt his whole energy revived and his spirits cheered by the fresh, cool air of that December morning, as he walked to and fro, by the side of his happy father, through the neat garden and little shrubbery, now and then pausing to admire some flower which still remained in bloom, while he listened to some piece of news of the neighbourhood, or the recital of some interesting incident in his own life, from the lips of his father, or related some anecdote or adventure of his own during the war from which he had just returned.

Nothing was said by the colonel or his son about the Wyndhams, though several times the thoughts of our hero went off in that direction, returning to his mind with a certain

vague, uneasy sense of depression, which it was impossible for him entirely to shake off; and he could not help feeling that the fact of Mr. James Murray being at Bilford Hall the evening before, coupled with what he had overheard as he passed the house, and with what his mother had told him, was strongly confirmatory of the report that Blanche Wyndham was soon to become the wife of that gentleman, who evidently only wished to marry her for what he expected her father would give her, and did not care whether it was in accordance with her own feelings and wishes or not, which William Haverty felt sure were utterly opposed to a union with such a man as James Murray. Still he tried not to think of this, but to wait till he had seen Blanche herself, before he made up his mind to any particular course of action in the matter.

After walking for some time through the garden and grounds with his father, he went into the house to make a slight alteration in his dress, preparatory to his going to call upon the Wyndhams. It was nearly midday, therefore, when he went out for that purpose. He had dressed himself in his plain walking attire, without any sign or in-

dication of his military character, except what was discernible in his erect, manly bearing and soldier-like air; and who can wonder if his fond mother cast a proud look after him as he walked down the drive toward the gate, and prayed in her heart that He who had given her such a son, and preserved him amid so many dangers, would continue to watch over and bless him in all his goings and desires.

Captain Haverty, not wishing to increase their anxiety on his account, had refrained from telling his parents anything of the previous night's adventure with Mr. James Murray: and he was in hopes that he might avoid meeting that gentleman by making his call upon the Wyndhams as early in the day as possible. This, as well as his anxiety to see Blanche, was one reason why he had not delayed his visit till after lunch.

In the meantime, Patrick O'Brien, who had already contrived to ingratiate himself completely into the good opinion of both the cook and housemaid, was very busy cleaning and arranging his master's arms and regimentals, brushing his clothes, and assisting in various other household duties indoors—at all of which he was most useful and handy,

and was as much at home as if he had been in the house for years.

O'Brien, like most of his countrymen, was full of humour, vivacity, and good-temper, and had plenty to say for both himself and his master. The two staid domestics of the colonel, who had seldom been beyond their own native vale in their life, and certainly never farther than the neighbouring town of Westdon, or beyond the sight of their own hills, were startled a little at first by what they considered the somewhat free-and-easy manner of our gallant Hibernian. But his perfect good-humour, gay spirits, and willingness to oblige and assist them, soon gained their entire favour. Then, too, he had so many amusing stories to tell them, and wonderful adventures to relate, and dangers to recount, that they could not help being amused and interested in him, without at all taking into consideration that, although he might be half a dozen years older than his master, he was still a young man; and one, too, who had a very fair share of good looks as well as a lively tongue to recommend him.

It is not, then, to be wondered at that Patrick O'Brien soon became a great favourite with both the female servants, especially with

the laughing-faced, smart, good-tempered housemaid, Mary Packer, who was certainly quite as ready to show him where to find or to place things, to assist and arrange his master's clothes and carrying his trunks upstairs, and put his linen in the drawers, as there was any occasion for. Mary—who had overlooked the fact that her master was an Irishman—always had had the idea that an Irishman was little better than a kind of cannibal or savage: and O'Brien was a stranger in the house, and wanted some one to tell him things and to show him about. Besides, O'Brien was such an amusing fellow, that she could not do otherwise than as she did.

'But, Patrick'—she had got his name quite pat—'but, Patrick,' she said, looking more than half-frightened at a revolver the other had just put down upon the top of a chest of drawers in the dressing-room, adjoining his master's bedroom, 'you don't mean to say that our young master used to kill people with that pistol? and with that big sword, too! I dare say, if the truth was known——'

'Och, sure an' he did! Lots o' them!' returned Patrick, with the most perfect *sang-*

froid. 'An' what, sure, might ye think they were intended for, if not for killing the inemy with?' he inquired.

'Why, I thought as how the officers didn't fight, but only ordered the soldiers to do it,' returned Mary, with a half-incredulous look.

'Sure, an' ye didn't think that Patrick O'Brien was goin' to demane himself by engagin' a masther that didn't like fightin', but wanted that part o' the duties done for him —though I was just the boy to have done it, too, if he had wanted! My masther was not the sort o' gintleman for that at all, at all! Och, my jewel, 'twould have done yer heart good to have seen how he rushed into the battles, like the devil himself at Donnybrook fair, and cared no more for the cannonballs and rifle-bullets that were falling around him, and murthering the souldgers by thousands, than if they had been only boiled paise or cook'd potaties thrown at him in fun by the inemy! Och, by my soul! but it was a trate to see how nately he brought down the Rooshans with that same convanient little revolver! an' lopped off their heads with that illegant paice of bright steel there! with the smoke an' sweat on his face, an' the blood dripping from his sword——'

'Stop, Patrick!' cried Mary Packer, with a shudder; 'if you go on talking that way, I shall never be able to come into this room again, or look at them dreadful things, without thinking I see dead men or ghosts before me.'

'Och, then,' returned Patrick, with a sly look, 'isn't it just myself now that will come wid ye, an' kape the dead men from hurtin' ye, an' disparse the ghosts, as St. Patrick disparsed the sarpents out o' that nate little island o' ours, called Ould Ireland.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Mary, with a coquettish toss of the head; 'I dare say you would like that, wouldn't you, now?'

'Och, sure an' I would,' replied Patrick, gaily.

'Well, don't you wish you may get the chance!' replied the saucy little housemaid, with a provoking grin, as she ran out of the room, leaving the captivated Patrick to finish the arrangement of his master's things in the dressing-room.

She had not been long gone, however, when she re-entered the room with an anxious expression in her face, which O'Brien observing, good-humouredly exclaimed:

'Sure an' ye haven't seen any o' them men

an' ghosts already, have ye, my pretty darlint? Let me see them an' I'll soon disparse them as the glorious Ninety-third disparsed the inimy on the heights of Alma!'

'Oh, don't be foolish!' said Mary Packer, rather impatiently, though evidently not displeased with the gallantry of the Irishman. 'But didn't you say that the gentleman you had the shindy with, as you called it, in the lane last night was a magistrate, and that he threatened to send a policeman after you this morning?' for O'Brien had already related to her and the cook his encounter with Mr. James Murray.

'Yes, sure an' I did; for he tould me so himself,' replied Patrick decisively; 'but I didn't belaive him, the unmannerly spalpeen!'

'Well, you may then, for there's a policeman been walking backward and forward on the road before the house, cook says, for the last half-hour; though how he should have known you were here is more than I can tell,' said Mary Packer, forgetting that she had heard the cook telling the baker's man in the morning that her young master had come home, and had brought such a nice young man with him, which latter piece of intelligence was not so gratifying to the said

baker's man as might have been wished, owing to some secret thoughts entertained by himself respecting the pretty housemaid, which the advent of our friend Patrick O'Brien he feared might perhaps interfere with the fulfilment of.

No doubt the artful policeman had found out, from the baker's man, the arrival of Captain Haverty and his servant the night before, and thought that they might in some way be able to afford some clue to the perpetrators of the outrage that had been committed upon the person of Mr. James Murray, especially as that gentleman had said he thought they were strangers, and that one of them, at least, was an Irishman ; and knowing that Colonel Haverty was himself an Irishman, and that his son was expected home from the Crimea, who might very likely have brought an Irish servant with him, and might possibly have been the person who had attacked the magistrate—for Mr. Murray had said that the other person concerned was slightly in advance when the first man attacked him and tried to pull him from his horse—he thought if he could by any chance meet with either of the colonel's servants, both of whom he knew, he might be able to

find out from them how far his surmise was correct; and for this reason had been apparently sauntering about the road in front of the house near the gate for some time back.

'Och, an' he's besaigin' me, an' walking sentry outside the walls, is he?' exclaimed Patrick O'Brien with a half-contemptuous, half-surprised look. 'Give me the revolver and that bit o' polished stail, an' I'll clear the way o' sich a spalpeen as he is.'

'Stop, Patrick!' exclaimed Mary in terror, running between him and the door. 'You mustn't go out with them dreadful things; you'll commit murder and get hanged for it if you do.'

'Now be aisy, an' don't be afther frettin' that darlint heart o' yours on account of Patrick O'Brien doin' anything o' the kind, for there's no danger o' the inimy staying to be killt,' said the Irishman. 'But, as it's only a policeman, this will do just as well,' he added, taking up a stout walking-stick which happened to be standing in a corner of the room. 'Patrick O'Brien never was the boy to take unfair advantage o' an inimy, and it shan't be said that he attack'd even his natural inimy, the polaice, with superior arms. So let me pass, an' I'll make a sally

out upon his forces, an' compil him to raise the saige at once.'

'No, you mustn't go out. He doesn't want to fight you,' returned Mary, without moving from her place at the door.

'What the divil does he want, then?' exclaimed Patrick with an incredulous, disappointed look. 'If it ain't fightin' he wants, what does he mane by reconnoitrin' or besaigin' me in this house?'

'Now hear me, and leave off your big soldiering words, which I don't know anything about,' said Mary. 'I tell you I've no doubt but the magistrate has been to the Police Station, and sent the policeman to try to find out who it was that attacked him last night——'

'Halt now, my angel! for you've already lost the step. Ye mane who he attacked,' cried O'Brien, interrupting her.

'Well, never mind. You say you took the whip out of his hand and struck him with it,' continued Mary.

'Troth and I did,' he replied complacently, interrupting her. 'But sure an' it was afther he had struck me with it, the ungentail blackguard.'

'Well, never mind, I tell you,' replied

Mary, impatiently; 'I dare say you gave him quite as much as he gave you——'

'Och, an' ye didn't think that I was the boy to behave so unmannerly as not to pay the gintlemen for what he gave me!' cried Patrick, again breaking in.

'Now, if you don't hold your tongue I won't speak at all,' cried the housemaid sharply. 'You acknowledge that you struck the gentleman, and he has been and sent the police to find out who it was; and if you go out at all he's sure to suspect you of it, and take you away to prison at once, and perhaps my master and yours too for having you in the house!'

'Och, now, be aisy about that same,' returned Patrick. 'I'm not the boy to be taken prisoner by one man, at all, at all.'

'But if he should see you and want you to go with him, you must go,' argued Mary.

'By the powers, now, don't be taisin' o' me in that way! Do you think I would demane myself an' dishonour the sarvice by yieldin' to one inimy?' replied Patrick, half indignantly.

'I see it's no use talking to you,' said Mary, preparing to try what power a little crying might have upon the incorrigible

Irishman. 'We shall be all took'd up for 'sault and battery and sent to prison, all through you! and you don't care nothing for none of us!' she said, putting her apron to her eyes.

'Och, bad luck to my mother's son for makin' ye unaisy, my jewel!' exclaimed Patrick, perfectly subdued, putting down the stick and looking the agitated housemaid tenderly in the face; 'only tell me what ye wish an' I'll do it, my beautiful!'

'I don't want you to do nothing,' replied Mary, pretending to dry her eyes, 'only to stay in the house for fear the policeman sees you.'

'Well, be aisy now an' I will,' said Patrick entreatingly; 'though sure an' it's mighty hard to be besaiged by one solitary man, an' a policeman too! But to plaise ye I'll remain in the fortress till the inimy is driven away, or has to raise the saige for want o' provisions.'

'Thank you; I'm so glad!' cried the housemaid, with a pleased look. 'Now mind your promise,' she added, preparing to leave the room.

'Sure, now, an' ye don't mane to leave the room that way while the inimy is at the

gate, too,' said Patrick with a cunning look, making an attempt to get near her. But before he could touch her she had opened the door and fled to the landing; turning back, however, as she began to descend the stairs, with a provoking toss of her little cap, saying:

'Now, mind, I have your promise. If you break it I shall never speak to you again.'

'Well, ye don't deserve me to keep it,' rejoined Patrick; 'but,' he muttered, as he turned back and resumed the arranging of his master's things, 'I've given my parole, an' the word o' a soldyer mustn't be broken.'

Shortly after this the rural policeman, probably despairing of seeing either of the colonel's servants, or having other duties to perform or orders to obey, took his departure from opposite the house, much to the relief of both the cook and housemaid, and especially of the latter, who had certainly begun to feel a greater degree of interest in the safety and welfare of the gallant Patrick O'Brien than one might have expected from so short an acquaintance.

CHAPTER VII.

As William Haverty went out at the gate of his father's house and turned into the road which led towards Bilford Hall he met one of the county constabulary walking toward the gate, who seemed to look unusually hard at him; beyond observing this he took no further notice of the man, but quietly pursued his walk, his mind being too much occupied with his anticipated interview with Blanche Wyndham and her parents to have any thoughts to bestow on the probable business of the policeman.

At first Captain Haverty's mind was comparatively calm and composed; after about a quarter of an hour's steady walking, as he approached the house, which stood on a small lawn, flanked on each side by a shrubbery, much of his mental composure forsook him,

and as he laid his hand upon the gate that opened upon the road up to the front of the house, so great was his agitation that he felt strongly disposed to turn back and postpone his visit till he was better able to allay and control his feelings; but at that moment, happening to see one of the servants at the door, which was about forty or forty-five yards back from the road, he threw off his hesitation, opened the gate, and walked up toward the house with a firm step and composed air, which but little agreed with the secret emotions that were swelling and throbbing within him.

'Oh, Mr. Haverty!' exclaimed the servant as she opened the door, with a look of agreeable surprise, dropping a curtsey as she spoke; 'I'm so glad to see you safe home again, sir.'

'Thank you, Eliza,' said the captain, pleased with the kindly welcome of the servant. 'I hope the family are all well,' he added, with assumed composure, rubbing his boots on the hall-mat.

'Yes, thank you; master and missus are both very well, at least,' she replied, with something like hesitation in her manner.

'Miss Wyndham is not unwell, I hope?'

said the captain quickly, with some uneasiness.

'Oh, I don't know as how young missus is ill, sir,' returned Eliza, rather embarrassed; 'only she'll be glad to see you, I'm sure. She knows you've come home, sir.'

'Indeed, Eliza! how did she know that already? I only arrived last evening,' said Captain Haverty, not without some pleasure at hearing there was still sufficient regard felt for him to be interested in his return.

'The baker told me this morning, sir. He heard it from your cook when he left the bread at your house, and I told Miss Blanche as soon as she came out from breakfast; and though she didn't say much at the time, only "Oh indeed, Eliza," I saw she was quite took'd up with it, and she runn'd off to her own room, and didn't come out again for near an hour, and when she did, oh, sir, her dear eyes were so red and her sweet face was so pale you would hardly have know'd her. But she hasn't the beautiful colour on her cheeks she used to have, nor the light, merry voice, nor the happy look she had when you went away, sir.'

'Indeed, Eliza, I am sorry to hear it,' said Captain Haverty, scarcely able to conceal his

agitation, and riveted to the spot by the words of the old domestic, with whom he was always a great favourite, and who was much attached to her young mistress.

Eliza had long seen the deep affection which existed between Blanche Wyndham and William Haverty, and had set her heart on seeing them married. Great, therefore, was her disappointment when it was lately discovered in the household that her favourite scheme was to be frustrated, and Mr. James Murray was to be the husband of Miss Wyndham, after all. She would, however, have borne cheerfully the disappointment if she had thought the happiness of her young mistress would be secured thereby. But this she felt confident would not be the case, and she also saw that the projected marriage was not only entirely in compliance with the wishes of her father, but utterly opposed to Blanche's own feelings. It was, therefore, with no small amount of gratification that she saw the re-appearance of one who might yet put a stop to the ill-sorted union, and defeat the designs of Mr. James Murray, for whom she had the most intense aversion and dislike.

'It doesn't seem as if your information

had been particularly gratifying or agreeable to her,' after a moment's pause.

'Ah, sir, you wouldn't have said so if you'd seed her when she com'd out of her room and met me on the landing upstairs, and—though you mustn't think she had ever spoken to me on the subject before—no, sir; she knows too well what's fit and proper for that. But when I met her as she com'd out of her room afterward she put her dear head upon my shoulder, and, though she could hardly speak for the sobbing of her dear, noble heart, she said: "God bless you, Eliza! you've given a relief to my heart that I almost despaired of ever receiving. But are you sure what you told me is quite true?" "Yes, dear Miss Blanche," I replied, though I could scarcely speak myself, I felt so overcom'd by my dear young mistress's crying and sobbing—though she didn't do it aloud either, for fear anybody else heard. "Yes," I said, "the baker told me this morning that the captain had com'd last night, and that you had brought a servant with you too, who your cook said was such a nice young man, and had been through all the great battles in the Crimeer with him,"' added Eliza, pausing, and wiping her eyes with the

corner of her apron. 'But I beg your pardon, sir,' she continued, 'for being so familiar in speaking to you; but I'm so glad you've com'd home, and thought you might like to hear that Miss Blanche hasn't forgot you.'

'Thank you, Eliza; I am very much obliged to you for your good feeling and for what you have told me,' said the captain, struggling to conceal his emotion.

'Shall I show you in, sir?' inquired Eliza, who had now assumed her usual manner of respectful deference.

'If you please, Eliza, unless the family are particularly engaged, or that I am too early to find any of them at home.'

Without waiting to give any reply she opened the door of a morning-room and showed the captain in. Now it so happened that she did not know that another of the servants had, only a few minutes before, shown in Mr. James Murray, who was at that moment giving Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham a full, particular, and much exaggerated account of the desperate attack that had been made upon him the evening before close to the house, while Blanche was sitting at the opposite side of the room, looking abstract-

edly out of the window, hearing, but scarcely noticing, what was said.

The moment Eliza saw who was in the room she shrank back, and would have closed the door, had not her mistress asked what it was and called her to come in.

'Mr. Haverty, ma'am!' replied Eliza, showing the captain in, and hastily closing the door, as if afraid of being called back to show him out again.

Had a cannon-ball or a thunderbolt suddenly fallen in the room it could hardly have created greater astonishment. Mrs. Wyndham turned first pale, then red, then pale again, but moved not from her seat, utterly unable to conceal her feelings as she heard these words. Mr. Wyndham rose from his chair with a half-angry, half-surprised stare; and Mr. James Murray sprang to his feet like one who suddenly finds himself brought face to face with a man he equally fears and dislikes; while Blanche Wyndham started up with a half-joyful, half-startled look, exclaiming:

'Oh, William — Captain Haverty!' and seemed as if about to rush forward to welcome him, when her eyes met the stern look of her father and the repelling glance of Mr.

James Murray, from which, with a sudden shrinking look of submissive indifference, she sank back upon her chair, and hung down her head, as if afraid to look upon him who had so unexpectedly entered the room.

'Blanche, my love!' said Mrs. Wyndham half-chidingly, for, poor old lady, she had not the heart to do it wholly, even to please her husband; for though at first she had been quite as anxious for her daughter to marry Mr. James Murray as her husband, yet, when she saw her only child beginning to droop and the fair bloom to leave her cheeks, her heart began to relent, and would willingly have foregone all further attempts at forcing her into a union against her own inclination.

Not so, however, Mr. Wyndham. Though in every other respect a most tender parent and affectionate husband, he looked upon his daughter's aversion to Mr. James Murray as a piece of mere girlish caprice, in which he would not, as a parent, allow her to indulge; and the more her reluctance increased the greater became his determination to make her yield to his views. Of course, too, he regarded the marriage of his daughter with

the great Mr. James Murray of Glemham Hall, the proud descendant of one of the highest and oldest families in the county, as one of the best things that could possibly happen to herself, as well as gratifying to his own feelings, believing that gentleman to be not only what we have just stated, but the possessor, which he ostensibly was, of one of the finest estates in the county.

'Blanche, my dear,' said her mother, 'you should remember you are no longer a child, or Mr. Haverty a boy, especially now that you are so soon to become the— —'

'Mother!' cried the pale girl, flushing red as crimson, 'for mercy's sake spare me a little longer, and don't let me hear that fatal word while I am still free from it——'

'Blanche!' exclaimed the father, interrupting her, in a severe, angry tone; 'how dare you talk so in the presence of your—of Mr. Murray—and of a stranger too!' he added with emphasis, glancing at Captain Haverty, who stood in an awkward state of embarrassment and agitation, easier imagined than described. For a moment he felt half inclined to retreat from the room, but a second impulse bound him to the spot, and he stood staring first at one and then at another, so

confused and bewildered that for several seconds he was unable to speak.

In a single glance he comprehended the entire position of affairs. That sudden start and that peculiar exclamation of mingled joyful surprise and painful embarrassment, as well as her whole appearance, had not only told him of Blanche Wyndham's utter aversion to the projected marriage with Mr. James Murray, but assured him of her unchanged and unchangeable love for himself.

He therefore determined that nothing on earth within the limits of honour and duty should prevent him from endeavouring, to the very utmost of his power, to frustrate that impending ill-assorted union, or induce him to give up his long-cherished affection for Blanche Wyndham.

'Mr. Haverty! Oh, how do you do?' at length stammered Mrs. Wyndham, rising and formally holding out her hand. 'You will excuse us for being a little taken by surprise. Your entrance was so sudden and—so unexpected, I might almost say, as indeed it was—that we were all rather startled at first. It is so very long since we have seen you, and my daughter and you having been such

friends when you were children, it was only natural, wasn't it? that she should be rather startled at your appearance, to congratulate her upon her approaching——'

At this moment the mother met the dejected, imploring look of her daughter, and, understanding it, refrained from pronouncing the objectionable word which was already on her tongue.

'I am very sorry, madam,' said Captain Haverty, assuming all the composure he was able, 'to have intruded so suddenly, and interrupted you when you were engaged; but, presuming on our old intimacy, and not knowing there was anyone here but yourselves, I ventured to call upon you rather earlier in the day than I otherwise should have done; and have thus, I am afraid, interrupted you, but——'

'Oh, never mind, Mr. Haverty,' interrupted Mr. Wyndham, whose natural good feeling and sense of hospitality would not permit him to treat an old friend or a visitor with discourtesy. 'How are you?' he asked, holding out his hand, which the captain took hold of and shook somewhat formally. 'I heard you were expected home, but didn't know you had arrived.'

'I reached my father's last night,' replied the captain.

'Well, I'm glad to see you, after that terrible affair in the Crimea. And so you've had an advance, too, I hear,' rejoined Mr. Wyndham.

'Yes; I have been fortunate enough to make a little progress since I last saw you.'

'I am glad to hear it. Oh, let me introduce you to my intended son-in-law—Mr. James Murray of Glemham Hall,' said Mr. Wyndham, in a tone evidently intended to crush any latent thoughts or hopes he might have of attaining that happiness himself. 'I daresay you have heard of Mr. James Murray before. He is the representative of one of the oldest families in the county.'

'Yes; I have heard of the name, and also have had the honour of meeting Mr. Murray before, I think,' replied the captain with suppressed feelings, as he stiffly bowed to that aristocratic gentleman, and thinking of what he had heard when passing the house the night before.

'Humph! ha! Mister—or Lieutenant, I think—Haverty,' returned Mr. Murray, with a lofty air of affected indifference and

feigned forgetfulness of such an obscure personage.

'No; Captain, is it not now, Mr. Haverty?' said Mrs. Wyndham suggestively.

'I have the honour of bearing a captain's commission now, madam,' replied our hero, with a glance of indignant contempt at the last descendant of the Murrays of Glemham Hall, who walked away toward the window where Blanche Wyndham was sitting; but the moment he approached she rose hastily and took a seat at the opposite side of the room, undeterred by the angry glances of both her father and her mother as she did so, while her intended, feigning not to have observed it, returned to his chair between Mrs. Wyndham and her husband.

'So you've got back again to see your father and mother, and I suppose to look out for a wife, too, like the rest of the young men,' said Mr. Wyndham, addressing our hero. 'I daresay some of your old sweethearts won't refuse you now that you are a captain.'

'How do you know that Mr. Haverty has not found one already?' remarked Mrs. Wyndham, glancing first at her daughter and then at her husband.

'Ay, to be sure; why shouldn't he?' returned the latter, with a forced laugh. 'I always thought you would bring back a Mrs. William Haverty with you.'

'Then you have been deceived,' replied the captain, 'for nothing could have been further from both my own thoughts and my expectations.'

'Ah, well; plenty of time yet. You young men in the army are all the better for not hampering yourselves with wives too early.'

William Haverty saw in a moment that this conversation was intended by Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham to show him that they had not the slightest idea of his having any regard for their daughter, and had quite forgotten the tacit acquiescence they had previously given to his attentions to her.

'Why, Blanche,' said the mother, as if she had just thought of it, 'don't you want to shake hands with your old friend Mr. Haverty? You observe,' continued the mother with forced composure, for it was evident her heart knew otherwise, 'you see, William—captain, I should say—but you perceive that I even almost forget you are no longer a boy—or what you used to be,' she

said with some confusion—'but you see, considering what we were just talking about when you came in, and the near approach of —of—I dare say you have heard about it from your father or mother—of what is going to take place—it is only natural that she should feel a little embarrassed and bashful before a stranger, or rather, before an old friend as you once were, and in the presence of her future hus——'

'Mother!' shrieked the daughter, in a wild, melancholy tone, interrupting her, 'unless you wish to kill me, do not pronounce a word that goes through my head like a knife!'

'Well, well, if you don't like to hear it yet, I won't say it,' returned the mother, who was evidently acting against her own nature to please her husband.

'Blanche! I'm ashamed of you,' said her father, with an angry frown, 'to behave so foolishly, not only before your—your—before Mr. James Murray, but Mr. Haverty also.'

William Haverty's heart felt as if it would burst with anguish, as he beheld the intense agony of his beloved Blanche, who again, before the stern voice and angry look of her father, shrank back into a corner of the sofa, where she was now sitting as if utterly

heart-crushed beneath the prospect of the doom that was approaching her.

'I am sorry to see Blanche—Miss Wyndham—looking so poorly,' said William, after a brief but painful pause.

'Humph! Yes, she certainly does not look quite so well as she used to do, but it's rather an anxious time with her just now, you know, and that does not make her quite in such good spirits — I mean, it makes her more thoughtful, perhaps, than usual,' replied the father.

'Poor Blanche!' thought William, with a deep though repressed sigh; 'how little your parents seem to study your happiness in trying to force you into a marriage so contrary to your own feelings; with a man, too, who evidently has no regard or sympathy with either your emotions or sentiments.'

Fain would he have approached and spoken to her, but had too great difficulty in concealing his feelings to venture upon any severe trial to his self-command.

'Mr. Murray has just been telling us of a dreadful attack that was made upon him by two ruffians, almost close to the house, last evening, shortly after dark,' said Mrs. Wyndham, addressing Captain Haverty.

'Oh, indeed!' he replied; 'I hope he has received no serious injury,' he added, with a slight glance of secret contempt at that gentleman, who was sitting with his face partially turned from him, talking to Mr. Wyndham.

'No, I believe not. But he says it required all his strength to get clear of them. However, he has just told us he has sent the police on their track, so I hope they will soon be discovered and brought to punishment.'

'What does he suppose was their motive for attacking him?' inquired the captain, secretly amused, in spite of his painful emotions.

'Well, he can hardly tell, unless it was to rob him; for what else could they want?' replied Mrs. Wyndham.

'Was he walking, or on horseback?'

'Oh, riding. He had just left here, and was on his way to Glemham Hall, where he lives.'

'Did he lose anything in the fray?' asked our hero.

'I believe not.'

'Well, that scarcely looks as if robbery had been intended.'

'I suppose, being a powerful, courageous

man, he prevented them from accomplishing their object. But one of them, who, by-the-bye, he says, he thinks was an Irishman, by his brogue, struck him violently with—what was it, Mr. Murray, that dreadful man struck you with last night ?' asked Mrs. Wyndham, addressing that gentleman.

'Well, as it was rather dark, I can hardly tell, Mrs. Wyndham,' said he, with a slightly confused look, as he met the keen, scrutinizing glance of Captain Haverty; 'it seemed like a stout bludgeon or tough walking-stick, as far as I can judge.'

'What a mercy it was he escaped as he did!' said Mrs. Wyndham, again addressing the captain. 'Had he been seriously injured, I don't know what we should have done. My poor daughter would have been distracted.'

Could Mrs. Wyndham really believe what she said ? No; it was quite impossible. She was evidently trying to force herself to believe what her own womanly nature and mother's heart told her were utterly false. Had it not been that the image of the Mrs. Wyndham he had known in former days rose up before him and soothed his feelings, William Haverty would have almost turned

away from her with scorn and indignation for her duplicity and self-deceit. He paused for a moment, thinking if it might not be as well to explain the matter at once by telling that the two 'ruffians' were no others than himself and his servant, and that the 'bludgeon' was only Mr. James Murray's own riding-whip, that his servant had snatched out of his hand, after having been struck with it. But the delicacy of his position, and the fear lest it might not have been imputed by them to a feeling of jealousy against a rival, restrained him, as a similar reason induced him to withhold from Blanche and her parents what he had overheard near the gate the same evening.

Just as these thoughts were passing through the mind of William, a servant entered to say that Mr. James Murray was wanted, who immediately rose and left the room, casting a peculiar glance of mingled jealousy and inward hate at our hero as he went out.

'It's a policeman, I suppose,' remarked Mr. Wyndham, looking very mysteriously at his wife. 'Mr. Murray told me he desired them to see him here, if they were able to discover anything.'

'I hope the police have found out who it was,' returned Mrs. Wyndham.

'Well, I fancy he has some suspicion who they were, but I hope he's mistaken,' said Mr. Wyndham, with a glance at the captain.

'Indeed!' rejoined his wife, wonderingly. 'Who does he think they were?'

'Well, just as he was rising to leave the room, he gave me a slight hint that led me to think he has some idea who to fix it upon, but he didn't say who it is, though I guess pretty well who he meant.'

'Mr. James Murray wishes to speak to you, if you please, sir, in the dining-room,' said a servant at this moment, entering the room.

Mr. Wyndham instantly rose and went out, while, whether it was from some secret foreboding of her own, or that she, in her occasional furtive glances at the face of William Haverty, had discovered by his countenance that he knew something of the matter, it was, perhaps, difficult to say; but as her father left the room, Blanche Wyndham cast a quick, intelligent look at our hero, as if to warn him to be on his guard, in case he was in any way concerned in the attack upon Mr. Murray, for although he regarded the whole

affair with the most thorough contempt, it assured him of the interest and affection still felt by Blanche Wyndham for himself.

'What can they want Wyndham for? He does not know anything as to who it was, I should think,' said Mrs. Wyndham, wonderingly, rising and going towards the window.

'Why, there's Colonel Haverty coming up to the door, and a policeman with a man along with him!' she exclaimed.

'For God's sake, William — Captain Haverty,' cried Blanche Wyndham, springing to his side and speaking in a deep and earnest whisper, as her mother was looking out of the window, 'if you have in any way been concerned in this affair, fly! That man hates you, and will say or do anything to disgrace and injure you—to make sport of his victim!'

He would have seized her in his arms and clasped her to his heart, but quick as lightning she went from his side, and with a silent look of despairing love, glided from the room, just as her mother, hearing her move, turned round and left the window.

The next moment Mr. Wyndham reentered the room and asked Captain Haverty if he would step into another room for a few

minutes, which he, without offering any remark, instantly complied with, thinking more of the two agitated, earnest words of Blanche than of any other subject, for in that brief moment, and in those few syllables he had heard enough to assure him of her unshaken love for himself and her anxiety for his safety and honour. He regretted he had not been able to assure her that he had been in no way concerned in any attack upon Mr. Murray, in case she imagined that he had, and was prevented from stating the real extent of the matter to her. But the quickness with which she left the room rendered this impossible.

'Mr.—perhaps I should say Captain—Haverty,' said Mr. Wyndham, as he led him into a small room adjoining that in which they had been sitting, and closed the door behind them, 'this seems a very unpleasant piece of business, but Mr. James Murray appears to have some idea that you were one of the persons who attacked him last evening near this house. I hope, however, he is mistaken; I should be deeply grieved if his suspicions are correct. In fact, I cannot believe but he is wrong. He attaches the most importance to it from the fact that your servant, who, it appears, came home

with you, is an Irishman, and that you and he were seen coming over the hill by the footpath from the town a short time before the attack was made upon himself. I have too much confidence in your character, and respect for both yourself and your father and mother, not only to be unwilling to believe you capable of committing such an outrage as he says was perpetrated upon him, but also to be exceedingly grieved if he has any grounds for his suspicion. Your father, as well as your servant, have just arrived, I see, and, as I think it is better for your sake, as well as for Mr. Murray's, to have the matter inquired into at once, and on the spot, I have induced him to let me send off for a magistrate. Though a magistrate himself, he cannot act as one in his own case, and I have proposed having the matter privately inquired into first, to avoid giving any unnecessary pain to you and your parents, in case of his being mistaken, which he has at length consented to ; so I have sent for General Fielden, who, you are aware, is a magistrate, and asked him to come over as quickly as possible to get the thing settled. I am deeply grieved that anything so disagreeable should have occurred so soon after your arrival, though I

sincerely trust it is all a mistake on the part of Mr. Murray.'

I am much indebted to you, Mr. Wyndham, for your friendly offices and good feeling in the matter,' said Captain Haverty, more vexed than alarmed at the appearance of the affair, 'and glad to find that whatever change may have taken place in your estimation of me in other respects, you have not lost your good opinion or confidence in my honour.'

'No; I think I know you too well ever to do that,' replied Mr. Wyndham, in his former friendly tone, although slightly embarrassed at the same time.

'Yet,' continued William Haverty, 'Mr. Murray's suspicions are in some way correct, though his whole account of the matter is an utter, unmitigated falsehood!'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Mr. Wyndham, with a startled look; 'then you did attack him after all!'

'No; I did not so much as see him till the whole affair was ended, and it was only his cries that called me back, for I was a short distance in advance of my servant when it took place; nor had I the slightest wish to have concealed it, except out of respect for

him, in regard to his probable connection with your family.'

'But how did it occur at all, captain?' inquired Mr. Wyndham, rather coldly. 'The attack, according to Mr. Murray's account, was both very violent and unprovoked.'

Just as William Haverty was about to reply, a servant came to say that his father wished to see him for a few minutes, who was accordingly, by the orders of Mr. Wyndham, shown into the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

'How do you do, colonel?' said Mr. Wyndham, shaking the solitary hand of the old soldier very cordially, for it was impossible to be otherwise with the free, open-hearted old gentleman. 'This seems rather an unpleasant piece of business, and I am sorry to find your son has actually been, much to my disappointment, concerned in it.'

'My son's servant has just told me the whole affair,' returned the colonel, drawing himself up somewhat proudly, as he courteously returned Mr. Wyndham's greeting, 'and had I been in my son's place—old as I am, and one-armed as I am, Mr. Wyndham, ay, or in his servant's place either—I doubt very much if Mr. Murray would have got off so easily as he did, after such an unprovoked assault.'

'Indeed, colonel,' returned the other rather stiffly, 'you must know that I feel rather interested in this matter, in respect to Mr. Murray's present position in my family, as well in regard to himself, especially as it took place so near my house, too.'

'I am well aware of it, Mr. Wyndham,' returned the colonel, 'and were Mr. Murray here himself I could only repeat my words; and I consider that the only object he has now in view is to annoy as far as possible, and injure my son and myself.'

'Surely, colonel, you cannot think for a moment I would lend myself to anything so dishonourable,' said Mr. Wyndham, with a look of straightforward honesty, which instantly allayed the irritation of the fiery but generous old Irishman.

'No, I don't believe you capable of anything of the kind, Mr. Wyndham,' replied Colonel Haverty frankly. 'I have known you too long to have so mean an opinion of you; and I am sorry to express so ungratifying an opinion of your intended son-in-law; but I believe, nay, I am confident, that he was not only the aggressor, but that he has tried to make the affair seem fifty times greater than it really was.'

Further conversation was prevented by the intelligence that General Fielden had arrived, and had been shown into a room where he wished to see Mr. Wyndham, who, leaving the father and son to themselves, went out to state to the general what he had been sent for.

'I suppose, William, the account your servant has given me of this affair is correct?' said the father, as Mr. Wyndham left the room.

'I have no doubt but what he has told you is exactly as it occurred, for he knows the particulars much better than I do, as I saw nothing of it till it was all over,' replied the son, who, in a few words, related all he knew of the matter, not even omitting that part of the adventure wherein he had accidentally overheard the soliloquy of Mr. James Murray in the shrubbery as he passed the house.

'What a cold-hearted villain, as well as a lying coward, the fellow must be!' muttered the colonel between his teeth, as he heard this.

'But how is it, father, that you are here?' inquired the son.

'Well, as I was coming out of the gate

about half an hour ago, I saw a policeman coming towards me, who asked me if I had any objection to allow him to speak to the servant you had brought with you last evening, as he believed your man knew something about an assault that had been committed on a gentleman close to this house. Of course I looked upon it as all nonsense, but told him he might do so; and in a few minutes, much to my surprise, he came and told me it would be necessary for the man to accompany him here, where he had appointed to see the gentleman upon whom the attack, as he called it, had been made. Of course I at once desired him to do so, and came with him, and Patrick O'Brien has told me the whole of the affair as we came along.'

Just as the colonel finished his recital, Mr. Wyndham came back and asked them to accompany him into the room where General Fielden was ready to hear the case, which they accordingly did.

The room was the same that our hero had been first shown into.

'Colonel Haverty, how do you do?' said the general, shaking him heartily by the hand as he entered the room. 'I am delighted to see you, and your gallant son, too!

How do you do, captain?' he continued, shaking him cordially by the hand also; 'I am indeed pleased to see you so soon after your return from your dangerous but eminent services in the Crimea. But how is it that you are here? They want me to inquire into some assault that was committed last night upon my brother magistrate here, Mr. James Murray. You don't know anything of it, do you, colonel?'

'No, general; but they want to make out that my son here was concerned in it.'

'What! Captain Haverty? Impossible!'

'Will you hear the case before you attempt to decide upon it, general?' said Mr. James Murray, who did not overmuch relish the friendly tone of the conversation between him and Haverty.

'Certainly, Mr. Murray,' returned the general, courteously, 'and will do my best to bring home conviction to the offender, even if it should be my young friend Captain Haverty, much as I should regret that, and, till it is proved, shall disbelieve his complicity in any outrage such as that of which you complain.'

'Well, we shall see,' replied Mr. Murray, casting his eye from the other end of the

room towards the captain, with a slight sneer on his lip.

'Well, then, shall we inquire into it in a judicial form, or treat it in a sort of friendly fashion?' asked the general, taking his seat in an arm-chair, which had been placed for him at one end of the table, while Mr. Wyndham and Mr. Murray sat down on one side, and Colonel Haverty and his son at the other, whilst the policeman and Patrick O'Brien stood just inside the door.

'In a strictly formal and legal manner,' replied Mr. Murray.

'Very well; you are the complainant, I believe? Let me hear how this occurred,' quietly returned the general, who evidently had no very high opinion of that gentleman, nor yet much real respect for him, though he treated him with the greatest courtesy and politeness. 'Will you, Mr. James Murray, be so good as to state the nature and circumstances of this assault? You have no objection to be sworn, I suppose?'

Mr. James Murray rose, was formally sworn upon the New Testament brought in for the purpose, and thus spoke:

'Last evening, about five o'clock or a little

after, I left this house, on horseback, to go home; and had not proceeded more than from two to three hundred yards along the lane leading towards Westdon, when I was suddenly set upon by a man who beat me violently with a thick stick or some other hard instrument, and attempted to pull me from my horse; but fortunately I foiled him in this design, and had just got clear of him by spurring my horse, which plunged and broke from him, when another person, who appeared to have been lying in wait a little further forward, in case the first had missed me, came to his assistance; but in trying to catch hold of my horse's rein, he missed his aim, and I got past him, and was out of his reach before he could recover himself.'

'Have you any suspicions who they were who made this attack?' inquired the magistrate.

'To the best of my belief, it was that man standing by the door,' said Mr. James Murray, looking towards Patrick O'Brien, who had heard this account of the affair with much impatient astonishment, which the policeman had great difficulty in soothing down and controlling.

'Can you swear to him?'

'I am upon oath, and I say yes,' said the other, firmly.

'You are quite sure?'

'I am—positive.'

'But how are you so positive, Mr. Murray? It was dark, was it not? Might you not be mistaken?'

'I am not mistaken: I know him by his voice.'

'But you as a magistrate yourself, Mr. Murray, know that you cannot legally identify a man by his voice. Besides, we have not heard this man speak yet,' remarked the general.

'I can tell this man by his peculiar Irish brogue,' persisted the other.

'Humph! Well, we shall hear it presently. Who is the other person you accuse—as being his accomplice?'

'The person sitting opposite,' said he, with a shrinking look at our hero, in a purposely offensive tone.

'What! Captain Haverty?'

'Yes, if he is such,' returned Mr. Murray, with affected indifference, while the colonel looked as if he would fain have sprung to his feet and called him to account there and then.

'Never mind, colonel,' said the general, courteously, seeing his flush of indignation; and then, addressing the other, said: 'I can inform you upon that point, if you are so little acquainted with concurrent events as not to know both that and the eminent services he has performed in the late war, from which he has just returned.'

There was a slight tone of sarcasm in this, not at all gratifying to the pompous Mr. James Murray, who replied rather tartly:

'As we are not here to discuss Captain Haverty's services, but to inquire into a rather less creditable performance, we may as well leave them out of the question at present.'

'Quite right, Mr. Murray,' returned General Fielden, with perfect good-humour; 'only, as you seem ignorant as to who and what the gentleman is you charge with this offence, I ventured to inform you. Well, what share did he take in this attack of which you complain?'

'He is the second person who came up to me and tried to get hold of my horse to stop it.'

'Did he strike you?'

'I cannot swear that he did.'

'Oh, you are not sure, then?' said the general, quietly.

'I am not quite positive as to that.'

'But you surely must know if he struck you or not: he could not have done so without your feeling it,' said the general, with a suppressed smile. 'Did you see anything in his hand?' he asked, after a moment's pause.

'I am not sure that I did.'

'You are quite sure as to Captain Haverty being the same person?'

'Yes, I believe he is.'

'Oh, you believe he is. Have you any witnesses in proof of it?'

'There's a man here, your worship, who says he can identify the prisoners,' put in the policeman (who was standing beside Patrick O'Brien), at a look from Mr. Murray.

'Silence, officer! Captain Haverty is not a prisoner,' said the general, in a commanding tone.

'I beg your worship's pardon,' said the officious policeman, and shrinking back; 'I meant——'

'Well, never mind what you meant. Show your witness in,' said the magistrate, while William Haverty stared with astonishment at the intelligence.

'What is your name?' inquired the magistrate, as the man came in, and stood at the opposite end of the table, after being sworn. He was a down-looking, meagre-like man, in corduroy trousers, velveteen coat and waistcoat, a slouch kind of hat, which he held in his hand as he came to the end of the table. 'What is your name?' asked the general, looking the fellow in the face, whose eyes seemed to shrink from meeting the magistrate's glance.

'Thomas Bilson,' replied the fellow, concisely.

'Where do you live?'

'At one of the houses with the fruit-gardens on the other side of the hill, as you go towards Westdon,' replied the man, explicitly.

'What are you?'

'I rent one of the gardens.'

'Do you do anything else?'

'Yes; I sell the fruit and work the ground,' returned the man, with an impudent look.

'Just so,' said the imperturbable magistrate. 'But there is no fruit to sell at this time of year, is there?'

'I didn't say there was.'

'Come, now, be a little less ready with that

tongue of yours,' said the magistrate, with a slight frown, who had a suspicion that this fellow was something more than what he professed to be. 'What do you do in winter evenings, now, when there's no fruit to sell and it is too dark to work the ground?'

'Nothing.'

'Are you quite sure of that?'

'Yes; of course I am.'

'Well, what do you know of this assault upon my brother magistrate, Mr. James Murray, that was committed last night?'

'I don't know nothing of it at all.'

'Then what the—the——' said the general, checking an impatient expression; 'what are you here for? Mr. Murray, can you tell why the officer has brought this man forward?'

'I believe he can identify the—the——'

'Captain Haverty and his servant, you were going to say,' said the general, taking the word from Mr. Murray, who seemed to hesitate for a moment.

'Yes.'

'Why, the man has just said he knows nothing of the affair.'

'But he can, I believe, identify them as being the same persons who passed near his

house last evening about half an hour before I was attacked, and were coming in the direction of this house.'

'Well, I doubt if such proof as that can be taken as evidence. However, we can hear what he says, and if Captain Haverty wishes to ask him any questions afterwards he can do so. Where did you see the two persons accused of having made this attack upon Mr. James Murray?'

'Coming up the foot-path towards the hill, just beside my garden.'

'What time was that?'

'About half-past four.'

'How did you know what time it was? It was dark, was it not?'

'Yes; but I heard the cathedral clock strike the half-hour a few minutes before.'

'But might it not be half-past five, or six, or any other hour?'

'No; it hadn't been long enough dark for that.'

'You are quite certain as to the time?'

'Yes.'

'Then tell me who it was you saw. Do you see the same persons in this room?'

'The gentleman sitting at the side of the table there is one,' said he, pointing to Cap-

tain Haverty, who from the first had suspected this was one of the fellows that were lurking about in the lane, 'and that man there is the other,' he added, pointing to Patrick O'Brien, whose fingers itched to get at his ill-looking countenance.

'You are quite certain of that?'

'Quite.'

'But you say it was dark. How is it that you are so sure?'

'Oh, I know it was them.'

'But I ask you how you are so positive upon the point. How near were you to them?'

'Oh, quite close—only a yard or two.'

'Humph! Whereabout was that?'

'Just after they passed the wall of my own garden.'

'Where were you at the time you saw them?'

'In—I mean outside the garden,' returned the man, with something like hesitation in his manner.

'Oh, outside your garden. In the lane, I suppose?' said the magistrate, with a keen glance.

'Yes; on the foot-path.'

'Just so. Now what were you doing out-

side your garden wall on the foot-path after it was dark?' asked the general, with another searching glance.

'I suppose I can go there if I like without being called upon by everyone to give a reason for it,' returned the man sulkily. 'What do other people do outside their gardens or houses or on the foot-path?'

'Well, I am not asking you to tell me about other people. I only want to know what you were doing there last evening when you saw this gentleman and his servant pass up the foot-path?' replied the general, in a quiet, commanding tone.

The fellow paused for a moment, and then, after some hesitation, replied:

'Nothing.'

'Oh, nothing. But I suppose you were going to do something?'

'I don't know as I was,' replied the fellow impudently.

'That would have depended on circumstances, I suppose?' said the magistrate.

'I am afraid, general, you are going into a great deal of unnecessary matter,' interposed Mr. James Murray, who appeared to feel as if this witness was not likely to prove of much service to him, after all. 'Had you

not better keep rather to the subject of his having seen these persons?'

'Well, you must excuse me, gentlemen,' replied the general, addressing those around him, 'if I seem to be wasting your time; but I have my own reasons for the course I am taking, and, I assure you, my only object is to ascertain the truth and further the ends of justice. I believe that the position of the gentleman accused of being concerned in this matter entitles him to have a full investigation, as well as that of the complainant to full and unshrinking justice. What do you say, Mr. Wyndham? You are a mutual friend of both parties, I believe. Shall we proceed with the examination of this witness, or hear what the defendants have to say?'

Not observing a look from Mr. Murray, Mr. Wyndham said he was quite sure General Fielden had no other object in view than the futherance of the ends of justice, and as he had none other himself, he left it entirely in his hands.

'Very well, then, with your permission we will proceed,' returned the magistrate, 'and I promise you I will not occupy either your time or my own more than I can help. Now, Thomas Bilson, you say you were in the

lane when Captain Haverty and his servant passed, and that you were doing nothing at the time?'

'Yes.'

'Were you going anywhere?'

'No.'

'Were you coming from anywhere, then?'

'No.'

'You were standing still, I suppose?'

'Yes.'

'Were you alone, or was anyone else there beside yourself?'

'N—yes; a friend was with me.'

'Oh, a friend was with you! Is he here now?'

'No.'

'Didn't you bring him, policeman?' asked the magistrate, addressing that functionary.

'No, your worship. He lived some distance off, and I hadn't time to go and fetch him, and thought this one would be enough.'

'You were talking with this friend of yours, I suppose?' said the general, again addressing the witness.

'Yes.'

'How near did you say you were to this gentleman when you saw him?'

'Only a yard or two.'

'You're sure it wasn't more?'

'No.'

'It was not three or four yards, was it?'

'No. It might be three, but wasn't four.'

'You're positive upon that point?'

'Yes; quite positive.'

'Where were you when you saw them? Were you on the centre of the path or at the side?'

'A little bit at the side,' replied the man, showing signs of uneasiness.

'Eh—a little at one side! Why did you go to one side?'

'Why, to let them pass.'

'Oh, very polite of you. You are sure you had no other reason?'

'No; I had no other reason.'

'How far were you off the centre of the foot-path? Were you close in to the hedge, or merely a little to one side?'

'We went as close to the hedge as we could, so that they might pass without seeing us.'

'Oh!' exclaimed the general, with a quick glance; 'you didn't want them to see you! Were you afraid of them?'

'No; I can't say we were afraid of them, only we didn't care about them seeing us, in

case they might have been startled like,' replied the man with evident confusion.

'Then you did not want to frighten them, I suppose?'

'No.'

'Are people sometimes frightened in that lane after it is dark?' asked the magistrate, with a searching look.

'How am I to know that?'

'Oh no; certainly not. You never were frightened yourself there, I suppose?'

'No; I have no need to be.'

'Very true; you have no need to be. Will you say that you were not more than three yards at the most from the persons you saw there? Now, how were they dressed and what were they like?'

'I can't tell exactly how they were dressed. It was too dark to see that; besides, I didn't particularly notice.'

'Then how can you tell it was them you saw? Did you see their faces?'

'Yes.'

'What—it was too dark to see how they were dressed, and yet you saw their faces so distinctly that you can recognise them now?'

'Yes.'

'That seems rather odd,' remarked the

magistrate, with a dubious look. 'Were they, or either of them, carrying anything when you saw them?' he inquired, after a moment's pause.

'Yes,' said the man concisely.

'What was it?'

'I can't very positively say; but one of them, the one behind, carried something in his hand.'

'What was it like? Was it bulky?'

'Yes, something large.'

'Was it a walking-stick, or an umbrella, or anything of that sort?'

'No.'

'Had the one who was first anything in his hand?'

'Yes.'

'What was it? Had he a walking-stick?'

'No, not as I saw.'

'You were near enough to have seen it if he had?'

'Yes.'

'Well, what was it like?'

'I can't exactly say what it was like, as I didn't see it very distinctly; but I think it was a pistol.'

'A pistol! What made you think it was a pistol?' inquired the general, wonderingly.

'Because I heard it.'

'What! did he fire at you?'

'No, he didn't do that; but I heard something like the click of the lock, as if he was cocking it.'

'What did you do then?'

'Me and my friend turned round and ran off.'

'Oh, you didn't like the click of the pistol,' said the magistrate, quietly.

'No, not exactly.'

'How did you happen to hear of this attack upon Mr. James Murray?' asked the general, after a brief pause.

'I heard of it this morning.'

'I did not ask you when, I asked you how you heard of it,' returned the magistrate, looking at the witness, who was now evidently ill at ease.

'From the policeman.'

'Which policeman? This one?'

'Yes.'

'How did you hear of it from him?'

'Perhaps you had better ask the policeman himself, general,' suggested Mr. James Murray, who seemed to feel rather uneasy about his witness.

'Very well, Mr. Murray, if you wish it.

Now, policeman, tell me how you thought of mentioning the subject to Bilson.'

'Well, your worship, I was met by Mr. James Murray this morning, who told me of the attack that had been made upon him last night, and desired by him to try and find out, after he had described the persons of the two defendants as well as he could, telling me that one of them, he thought, from his brogue, was an Irishman. Shortly after that I ascertained that Colonel Haverty's son had come home last night, and had brought an Irish servant with him. I then went off to see if I could find anyone who had seen them between Westdon and Bilford, to learn if they agreed with the description that Mr. Murray gave of them, and to know the time they had left the railway-station; and as I was going along I met this witness, to whom I happened to mention the affair, and he told me he had seen them himself, and could identify them if he saw them again. So I brought him back with me; and after that I went and saw Colonel Haverty, and told him what had happened, and asked him if he had any objection to my seeing the servant and bringing him here with me, where I had promised to

meet Mr. Murray, and give him an account of my inquiries.'

'That is all you know of the matter, then, I suppose?'

'Yes, your worship, that's all.'

'Captain Haverty's servant did not object to come with you, I suppose?'

'Well, he would have done, I think, only the colonel told him he must come—and came with us himself, too.'

'How did you happen to suspect Captain Haverty and his servant as being the parties?'

'I didn't suspect them, your worship, at first, only, after I heer'd as how Captain Haverty had come home just about the time that this assault was committed, and that his servant was an Irishman, I thought as how it must have been the same parties, as no other Irishman had been seen in the neighbourhood but him.'

'Yes, but it did not follow that the man was going to remain in the neighbourhood, especially after having committed an outrage. He was all the more likely to get off as quickly as possible, in case of any inquiry being made,' remarked the general, quietly.

There was a short pause.

CHAPTER IX.

'Would you like to ask Bilson or the policeman any questions?' inquired General Fielden, addressing Captain Haverty.

'Thank you, I should,' replied the captain, rising. 'I have no doubt Bilson is perfectly correct in saying that he saw me near the gardens he mentions, as I also saw him; though but for his own confession, I should not have ventured upon identifying him as one of the fellows who were lurking in the lane as I and my servant came along last evening. He is also quite correct in what he states about the pistols; for, happening to have bought a couple of new revolvers in London, I had them with me, and, observing two men crouching close to the side of the dark hedge when there was no occasion for it, unless their motive had not been a proper

one, after having called to them and received no answer, I took one of the pistols myself and gave the other to my servant, to defend ourselves in case of any attack being intended. After which, having, I suppose, heard the slight click of the lock that he talks of, he and his companion, who had a dog with them, came out from the hedge, and, after walking on before us for a minute or so, took to their heels and ran off. So far, therefore, he is right—though I believe it utterly impossible for him or anyone to have recognised us again from what he saw of us then. But that, except to show his readiness to come forward to prove and swear to anything that he thinks will suit the object of his patron—I was going to say, but perhaps I had better say to suit Mr. James Murray, even if we had not already heard enough from his own lips to excite considerable doubts—nay, the strongest possible suspicion as to his real character and pursuits; I say without even thinking of this, his whole evidence goes for nothing as far as the matter in question is concerned. I should, however, as he has been brought forward by Mr. Murray, like to ask him one or two questions about that same meeting in the lane with us.

'You say you were merely standing talk-

ing with a friend when you first saw myself and my servant, and that your only motive for crouching into the hedgeside was to escape observation, in case of alarming us,' said the captain, turning to the witness.

'Yes, I said so.'

'Why should you have done that? The path was wide enough, wasn't it, for us to pass without interfering with you?'

'I don't know,' said the man, with a confused look.

'So you did not see us before we saw you before us in the lane?'

'No.'

'Are you quite sure?'

'Yes; quite.'

'Very well; that will do. Now I should like you to ask my servant a few questions about this, General Fielden,' said Captain Haverty, turning to that gentleman as he resumed his seat beside his father.

'Send him forward,' said the magistrate to the policeman.

'I beg to remind you, General Fielden,' said Mr. James Murray, with a rather disconcerted look, 'that Captain Haverty's servant is an accused person, and not in a position, at present, to be examined as a witness.'

'And I beg to remind you, Mr. James Murray,' returned the general somewhat haughtily, 'that the very fact of his being an accused person entitles him all the more to be heard in his defence. Besides, I am curious to know a little more about this rather officious witness of yours for my own satisfaction.'

'Well, if it is any satisfaction to you to waste time unnecessarily in inquiring into things not at all bearing upon the business in hand, I suppose, as we have called upon you to act, we must submit,' rejoined Mr. Murray in a vexed tone.

'Mr. Murray,' said the general calmly and gravely, 'I am an older man than you by very many years, and have been a magistrate much longer than you also; I therefore feel that it is not only uncalled for, but unnecessary for you either to offer any advice or adopt the tone you seem disposed to do. I hope my character as a magistrate in the county is sufficiently well known to render it superfluous for me to say that I have no other motive in this delicate inquiry than to elicit the truth and further the ends of justice as far as lies in my power.'

'Hear, hear,' said Colonel Haverty and

Mr. Wyndham also, who knew the general too well and was too true an Englishman at heart not to approve of this.

'Now, what is your name?' inquired the magistrate after a moment's pause, fixing his eyes upon the open countenance of the captain's servant, who had in the meantime taken his place at one side of the table, while the other witness still remained at the opposite end.

'Patrick O'Brien, plaise yer worship,' he replied, with a free, honest look.

'What are you?'

'An Irishman and a soldyer, yer worship.'

'Why, I thought you were the servant of Captain Haverty.'

'So I am, yer worship, an' proud o' the honour I am to sarve sich a true gintleman.'

'How is it you say you're a soldier, then?' inquired the magistrate gravely.

'An' so I am, plaise yer worship; I've been in all the wars o' the Crimee with his honour, an' fought agin them Rooshans, an' killt as many as if I had been a full sargent or corporal,' replied Patrick complacently, while both Colonel Haverty and the magis-

trate himself could with difficulty refrain from laughing.

'Well, you are now, at all events, the servant of Captain Haverty,' said the general, trying to look grave.

'I am proud to say that I am, yer honour,' replied Patrick heartily.

'How long have you been the servant of your present master?'

'Ever since my last master died of cholera at Alma. May the sun shine on his grave, and an inimy's shadow never fall upon it,' rejoined Patrick in a tone of quick sympathy, which was not lost upon the discriminating magistrate, nor yet upon one or two others.

'That was shortly after the landing of the British forces in the Crimea?'

'Yes, your worship.'

'And you have been with Captain Haverty ever since?'

'I have, yer worship; an', I hope, sarved him honestly.'

'Have you ever been guilty, or accused of being guilty, of any crime since you became the servant of your present master?'

At first Patrick looked as if half-offended at this, but a kind look from his master soothed his rising anger, and he replied:

'No, yer worship; an' plaise God, I hope I never shall be.'

'Nor ever been tipsy, have you?'

'If you will permit me, I will answer for him in this respect. I have never found him guilty, or had the least reason to suspect him of either dishonesty, drunkenness, or falsehood; but, on the contrary, have every confidence in him in not only these, but in all other respects,' said his master, rising and addressing the magistrate.

'Thank you. It is quite unnecessary for me to ask him any more questions on this point after that,' replied the magistrate with a satisfied look, and then, addressing Patrick, continued: 'I am glad to hear that Captain Haverty can speak so well of your character, not only for your own sake, but for the satisfaction of myself and these other gentlemen present, who are all anxious to see what light you can throw upon this unpleasant business. Now I want to ask you a few questions, which I hope you will answer freely and unhesitatingly. At the same time you are quite at liberty to refuse answering any question that might commit yourself in any way in the matter of the assault, if you were in any way concerned in it.'

'I shall tell your honour's worship the truth, an' nothin' but the truth.'

'Very well. What time did you and your master, Captain Haverty, leave the Westdon Station yesterday? You came home yesterday, I believe, captain?' said the general, looking at our hero, who replied in the affirmative. 'Now tell me as near as you can what time you left the Westdon Station yesterday? I ask you this question rather with reference to what Bilson has said, than with reference to the more immediate subject of this inquiry.'

'Just a little after four o'clock, yer worship.'

'In the afternoon, I suppose.'

'Yes, yer honour.'

'Humph! And you and your master walked from the station, did you not?'

'We did.'

'By what way did you come?'

'We marched along the side o' the river till we came to a bridge, which we crossed, and then through a dharty kind o' street afterwards.'

'Yes; and where then?'

'Afther that, yer honor,' continued Patrick, seeing that his master wished him to proceed,

'we turned to the left into a narrow foot-path, with a mud wall on one side and a hedge on the other, an' trees hangin' over it occasionally.

'That was after you left the street you mentioned.'

'Yes; sure an' it was.'

'And what time might it be then, do you think?'

'Sure we had walk'd a good bit since we left the station at four o'clock, an' it might ha' been about half-past four, yer honour.'

'Were you carrying anything?'

'Yes, an' it was a carpet-bag o' my master.'

'Hadn't you anything else, such as a walking-stick?'

'No, yer worship; I hadn't.'

'Had your master, Captain Haverty, a walking-stick?'

'No, yer honour; he had nothin' at all, at all, but them pair o' revoulvers that his honour has tould ye on, which were in his pocket.'

'Oh, you knew he had revolvers, then, did you?'

'Sure, yer worship, I didn't till he put one into my hand, an' took the other himself,

when we saw the two suspicious-looking thieves concailin' thimselves in the hedge as we came along,' said Patrick unhesitatingly.

'Oh, you saw the two men in the hedge, too, did you?'

'I did, yer worship.'

'Who saw them first, you or Captain Haverty?'

'Sure, an' it was mysilf that saw one o' them first,' replied Patrick; 'an' thin my master saw the two o' thim first.'

'What does he mean, Captain Haverty? I can't understand him,' said the magistrate, with a puzzled look.

'Try if you can explain to the magistrate how and where you first saw the men,' said the captain, addressing his servant.

'Well, plaise yer honor, as we were marchin' along the narrow road, with the dark hedge on one side, an' the ugly mud-wall on the other, my master in the front an' mysilf bringin' up the rair with the baggage, an' it bein' rather a queer-lookin' spot, I kept a sharp look-out, in case of a sudden attack o' an inimy; all at once I thought I saw a suspicious-lookin' slouched hat raised a little above the top o' the wall, with an ugly-lookin' face in it, betwain my master an' mysilf, an'

then drawn down again as I drew near it——'

'Was it dark at the time?' asked the general, interrupting him.

'Yes, yer honour; it was purty dark, but the moon was shinin' a little, an' I could see purty correck.'

'Oh, it was not so dark but you could see any object that was near you?'

'No, yer honor,' replied Patrick, pausing.

'Well, what did you see after that? Go on with your account.'

'Well, yer worship, afther I saw that I kept a still sharper look-out, an' hadn't gone far when I agin saw the same slouch'd hat slowly raised over the top o' the wall jist a little bit before where my master was. So I slipped up to his honor an' tould him, an pointed it out to him, but he thought it was nothin', an' marched on, while I stopp'd whin I came to the place, an' heard a voice, as if spakin' to a dog, close to the other side o' the wall, an' thin' someone got up an' run away.'

'That was before you came to the place where the two men were.'

'Yes, it was, yer honor.'

'Did you speak at all?'

'Sure an' I did, your worship,' replied Patrick. 'The next time I caught sight of the slouch'd hat raised above the clay wall I challenged the owner o' the same, and asked him why he didn't come over his battlement an' walk along like an honest man; but the unmannerly spalpeen hadn't the dacency to return my salute, but ran off like a thief or a cowardly inimy, who was afraid to let me come within reach o' him, or wanted to take advantage o' the nature o' the ground we were marchin' in.'

'And did you see any more of him after that?' inquired the magistrate, seeing Patrick again pause.

'No, yer worship, till his honor, my master, shoved a revolver into my hand, and pointed out the two o' them before us at the side o' the hedge.'

'What did you do, then?'

'Why, I wanted to push forward an' dislodge the inimy, but my master held me back an' took the laid hisself—just as he did at Alma—ordered thim to come out o' that, which at first they didn't appear to be going to do, but, looking to see if the firearms were ready for action, the lock o' my re-

voulver gave a bit o' a click, which alarmed thim, an' thin they com'd out o' their ambush, an' afther walkin' a few steps in front of us, took to their heels without even giving us the chance of exchangin' fire with them,' said Patrick, with a disappointed look.

'Well, considering all things, I cannot say that they did not take the safest course,' said the general, with an amused smile. 'So you saw no more of them after that?'

'No, yer worship; the inimy didn't make his appearance afther we dislodged him from his entrenchments in the hedge,' replied Patrick, with perfect gravity of countenance and manner.

'You said just now you thought the man behind the wall spoke as if to a dog. Did you see a dog?'

'Sure an' I did. When my masther pointed the two to me I saw a dog held by one o' thim, which gave a sort of a growl, an' got a kick from the man for its pains,' replied Patrick.

'So that was the last you saw of them?'

'It was, yer worship.'

'Do you think that man there is one of them?' said the magistrate, looking toward Bilson, who stood with a dogged, impudent

expression of countenance at the end of the table.

'Will yer worship tell him to put on his hat?' asked Patrick deferentially.

'Put on your hat,' said the general to Bilson, who slowly, but sulkily, complied.

'Sure now, yer worship, he is the very ill-looking fellow hisself that looked over the wall, an' aftherwards tried to concale hisself in the hedge,' said Patrick, after glancing at him for a moment.

'You're sure he is?'

'Sure now, yer worship, the ould gentleman hisself couldn't appear more like him than this.'

'Policeman, take the witness Bilson out of the room for a few minutes. I will send for him again if I want him, when I have had a little conversation with Mr. James Murray and the other gentlemen here.'

'Now,' said the general, as the two left the room, addressing Mr. Murray, 'perhaps you will see why I have taken so much pains to sift the character of this Bilson. I know him to be a most inveterate poacher, have strong suspicions that he haunts that lonely lane for no good purpose after dark, and firmly believe that he meditated an attack

upon Captain Haverty, no doubt to rob him, but was prevented by that gentleman's coolness, presence of mind, the sound of the click of the pistols, and the presence of his servant. Now is it not possible that, having been defeated in their object in the first instance, they went on and made the attack upon Mr. James Murray, of which he complains?'

'No; I am most unmistakably certain that those men were not the parties,' replied Mr. Murray quickly.

'Mr. Murray is perfectly correct so far,' said Captain Haverty, again rising, and, with a dignified look, addressing the magistrate, 'and I assure you, General Fielden, and the other gentlemen present, that it is from no desire to take advantage of the utter want of evidence against myself and my servant that I have allowed this inquiry to take the course it has done, and I at once unshrinkingly and unhesitatingly say that it was I and my servant who met with Mr. Murray last evening.'

There was a slight stare of astonishment in the countenance of General Fielden as the captain said this. He, however, said nothing, and our hero proceeded:

'But beyond this, I also unhesitatingly

and unshrinkingly say that the whole account given by Mr. Murray is utterly and entirely false.'

Captain Haverty cast a quick, flashing glance across the table at Mr. Murray as he said this, who gave a slight start, and changed colour, but did not speak; while the general looked gravely first at that gentleman, then at each of the others present, but made no remark, while Captain Haverty calmly and firmly continued:

'I say, and again repeat, that the whole account of this matter, as given by Mr. James Murray, is absolutely and utterly false: and if anyone has reason to complain of an assault, it is myself, or rather my servant, who was most unprovokingly and violently attacked by that gentleman last evening. How was it possible that I, coming from the railway-station, after an absence of nearly three years, could by any chance know that Mr. Murray was to be there last evening, and at that particular hour, and lie in wait to attack him, even if I had any motive or been dishonourable enough to do so? And in the case of my servant it is still more unlikely. He had never been in this part of England in his life before; had never even heard of

the august name of Mr. James Murray,' he said, with sarcastic glance at that gentleman, 'and could not possibly have any desire to attack or alarm him—though I believe he unintentionally did do the latter. But perhaps, as you have already taken so much trouble in this matter, you will kindly ask my servant to give you his version of the occurrence; and, in the first place, I accuse Mr. Murray of having committed an attack upon my servant, requesting that the latter may be allowed to state his charge, while I am quite ready to be examined as a witness.'

'Oh, this is rather turning the tables,' said the general, with a grave smile. 'Shall we go on with the inquiry?' he asked, looking first at Mr. Wyndham and then at Colonel Haverty.

'By all means, general,' said the colonel. 'The honour of my son and the character of his servant demand it.'

'Well, I think it is only justice to both parties to do so,' remarked the magistrate, quietly.

'Again, General Fielden,' said Mr. Murray, hastily, 'I object to the mode of procedure: an accused person ought not to

be, and cannot legally be examined as a witness.'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Murray,' returned the general; 'I have had no accusation as yet to disqualify him from being examined as a witness, if it were necessary: and, even if it were otherwise, he has a perfect right to be heard in his own defence. But the inquiry appears to me to be assuming quite a different shape. You hear that Captain Haverty now positively charges you with an assault upon his servant, and I am bound to listen to his charge as well as yours.'

'But his is merely an after-thought to weaken my accusation against him and his servant,' persisted the other.

'Well, we shall see: and, if such really proves to be the case, it shall neither prejudice your case, nor benefit his,' returned the magistrate. 'And now,' said he, addressing Patrick, 'let me warn you to be careful.'

'I will, your worship, an' nothing but that,' said Patrick, steadily.

'Very well, go on: and let me know how this assault took place. You say that Mr. Murray attacked you, and that you did not attack him at all.'

'No, yer honor; not till he had struck

me with his riding-whip, an' then only in self-defence.'

'Let me hear how it was.'

'That will I, if you plaise,' said Patrick, who paused for a moment, and seeing that the magistrate was waiting for him to go on, then proceeded: 'Well, my masther and mysilf were marchin' steadily along the road near to this house.'

'Was it before or after you passed the house?' said the magistrate.

'Afther, yer honor. Then as my masther an' mysilf were marchin' steadily along the road a little beyond this house in the dark———'

'But I thought you said some time ago it was light enough for you to see the face of the man with the slouching hat on,' remarked Mr. James Murray, evidently thinking he had caught him in an inconsistency.

'Ay, sure an' I did. But I didn't say there was much light thin, either, masther,' replied O'Brien, not the least disconcerted.

'Quite right. You said, I think, that it was dark then, but that the moon was shining a little,' interposed the general, looking at some notes he had taken.

'True an' yer worship has jist said it,' re-

plied Patrick; 'an' so it was now, only there were some big dark trees hangin' over the road that nearly hid it from the sight o' my eyes. Well, then, yer worship, as my masther and I were marchin' along, his honor a little in advance, an' mysilf bringin' up the rair——'

'What had you in your hand at the time?' interrupted the general.

'Only the baggage.'

'All your master's baggage?' asked the general, with a look of surprise.

'No, yer honor, only part o' it—only a carpet-bag,' replied Patrick: 'the rest my masther left at the station to be sent afther us.'

'Very well, go on with your story.'

'Well, as I was bringin' up the rair a little bit behint my masther, under the shadow of the dark trees, I heer'd a horse comin' up behint me at a mighty quick pace, as if at full charge upon an inimy, an' stood aside, in case o' being ridden down in the dark, and shouted to my masther, lest he might not have been prepared, to file off an' let him pass.'

'Why should you have thought it necessary to shout to your master?' asked the

general. 'Didn't you think he would hear as well as you?'

Patrick was unwilling to acknowledge that his master had passed him only a few minutes previously, evidently very much agitated, and that he feared this might prevent him from hearing the sound of the horse's feet before it was upon him. But an equally satisfactory answer was ready.

'Sure, yer honor, an' wasn't he anxious to get home, an' thinkin' o' the gallant ould gintleman his father beside him there, an' the lady his mother, an' perhaps o' somebody else besides? An' wasn't that enough to make a gintleman not hear what was comin' behint him?'

'Well, you thought so at least.'

'Sure an' I did, and shouted to him to stand clear; and jist as I did so, the gintleman drew up his horse an' ask'd me what I meant by tryin' to frighten him by my howlin'; an' I said to him, "I ask yer honor's pardon; but I didn't mane to frighten you, only to warn my masther to get out o' your way," when the gintleman swore at me like a Rooshan, an' attacked me with his big, heavy ridin'-switch, which I at first kept clear on; but at last he gave me a big slash

across the shoulders and over the face,' said Patrick, pointing to a slightly discoloured mark on his left cheek, 'an' thin, yer worship, I could stand it no longer——'

'What did you do then?' said the general, seeing him pause.

'Why, plaise yer worship, I returned the fire o' the inimy!' said O'Brien, steadily.

'What do you mean? You didn't fire at him, did you?'

'Sure I didn't demane myself by doin' that same.'

'What did you do then? You told me before that you had no stick of any kind.'

'Sure I did, an' neither I had. I tould him if it was fightin' he wanted, I was jist the boy that could accommodate him with a little o' that same: an' as he was tryin' to strike me agin, I saized hould o' his whip an' disarmed him, and jist paid him back the little debt there an' thin, when his howlin' an' cryin' brought back my masther to his assistance, who ordered me to give up his whip, an' thin' the gintleman rode away, swearin' an' callin' both my masther an' mysilf all the bad names he was acquainted with.'

'It was then with his own riding-whip

that you struck him, was it?' inquired the general, with a suppressed smile of contempt at his brother magistrate, who in vain tried to conceal his vexation and shame at so signal a proof of his cowardice and bullying temper.

'Sure, yer worship, is jist right in that same, now,' replied Pat, with perfect composure.

'And you used no other instrument?'

'No, yer worship. Patrick O'Brien niver took unfair advantage o' an inimy in his life by fightin' him with different arms from his own; an' as I couldn't do that convaniently jist thin, I waited till he had taken one turn at me, an' thin I took the liberty o' borrowin' his whip to pay him back with that same.'

As O'Brien said this without the slightest indication of bravado, and with the most perfect composure, it was almost impossible for those who heard and saw him to refrain from laughing, except, of course, Mr. James Murray, who sat with an expression on his countenance of mingled shame, embarrassment, and suppressed rage, which it is almost impossible to describe—we will leave the reader, therefore, to imagine it.

Both General Fielden and Colonel Haverty laughed outright: and even Mr. Wyndham,

with all his feeling for Mr. Murray, could not check a smile from passing over his face. Captain Haverty, who was more accustomed to the quaint drollery of his servant, was the only one who did not show any outward sign of amusement. There was only the smallest discernible smile of contempt on his countenance, as he cast a quiet, cool glance at Mr. Murray opposite, who, slightly colouring, rose from his chair, and said in an angry tone:

'I protest against the whole of what this impudent fellow has asserted. It is all a lie to shelter himself and his master from the punishment they ought to receive.'

'Stop a moment, Mr. Murray,' said Captain Haverty, using a dignified though somewhat indignant look, before which the craven soul of the other quailed like a spaniel beneath the eye of its master; 'before you talk of the punishment that both I and my servant ought to receive, you had better prove us guilty of the offence for which it is deserved. Now, I am quite ready to substantiate the greater portion of what my servant has said, who would no more have thought of attacking you or anyone else without very strong provocation, than I would myself submit to an

insult without speedily calling anyone who dared to give it to an account.'

There was something so calmly determined in the look and tone of William Haverty as he said this, that Mr. James Murray did not venture upon any further reply.

There was a short pause.

'Well, gentlemen,' at length said General Fielden, 'I have heard the whole of this case, and I regret very much that ever the thing should have occurred. As far as the charge against Captain Haverty and his servant is concerned, I do not think there is the slightest ground for sustaining it. In fact, it would have been much more creditable to my brother magistrate, Mr. Murray, if it had never been made, and still more so, had the affair never occurred, for it is very evident to me that he has acted with anything but the temper and firmness becoming either a gentleman or a magistrate. I will, however, give him the credit of supposing that, hearing some one suddenly call out close to him, he imagined it was done to startle him, as he is probably of a nervous temperament,' said the old general, with a sly look at the colonel and Captain Haverty, 'and in a moment of—I won't *say* fear—excitement he laid his whip

rather sharply and suddenly upon the unfortunate subject of his anger, who in his turn, I dare say not much relishing this sort of treatment, retaliated in the best way he could by snatching the whip out of Mr. Murray's hand, and applying it to its owner's own shoulders. Now, in doing this, I really cannot see that this man, Patrick O'Brien, did one whit less or more than I should have done myself in similar circumstances—as I believe any other gentleman present would have done. I, therefore, think that as Mr. Murray himself was the aggressor in the first instance, he ought to have been content to let the matter drop, and said nothing further about it, only taking care in future to be more on his guard against similar occurrences when he chanced to be out by himself in the dark.'

'Then you refuse to give me, a brother magistrate, any redress!' exclaimed Mr. Murray, in an offended tone.

'It is really beyond my power,' said the general, calmly: 'you can carry the matter further if you wish; but if you take my advice you will let it rest where it is, as it will in nowise tend to the increase of either your credit or respect in the neighbourhood if you do.'

Mr. Murray was about to make further remarks, which, from his manner and looks, in all probability would have been neither well-timed nor very respectful, but was stopped by Mr. Wyndham, who rose and said that, in his opinion, if Captain Haverty was willing to agree to it, the matter had better drop, as he could not see that any benefit could be derived by either party from continuing a subject anything but agreeable or satisfactory to anyone concerned in it. So, professing to yield to the solicitation of his friend Mr. Wyndham, for whose opinion and good offices he had the deepest and most respectful regard, rather than to his own conviction of the justice of his case, Mr. James Murray, after a little more badly feigned resistance, affected to agree and abide by the advice and opinion of his friend Mr. Wyndham, an experienced and esteemed brother magistrate, General Fielden, who, he felt sure, was actuated by the very best of motives in the course he had pursued in this painful inquiry, though he had taken an entirely different view of the case to what he, Mr. James Murray, expected, or which he, the said Mr. Murray, fancied he would have done had the case

been brought before him instead of the general.

General Fielden was a man of far too much experience and discrimination not to see through this shallow affectation of Mr. Murray; and it was only his own high sense of courtesy, and his respect for the magisterial character of that gentleman, that withheld him from expressing the secret contempt he entertained for the dishonourable and cowardly part Mr. Murray had played in the whole affair.

'Now, then, friend Wyndham, that this business is settled,' said the general, rising from his chair, and throwing off everything like a magisterial character, 'as I am here, although it is rather an unfashionable hour for calling upon ladies, I must just go and ask Mrs. Wyndham and your daughter how they are. Gentlemen, the court is dismissed,' he added, with a smile, as he was about to leave the room.

'Come, Colonel Haverty, won't you go with us?' said Mr. Wyndham; 'and you also, captain?' he added, seeing the father and son preparing to take their departure.

'You know I have already had the honour of paying my respects to the ladies this morn-

ing, Mr. Wyndham,' replied the latter, whose heart shrank from again meeting Blanche in her present state of wretchedness, and yet longing to see her again, in the hope of finding an opportunity to speak to her by herself.

'Oh, never mind; come on. It is long since we have seen you; and you too, colonel, you have neglected us very much of late,' returned Mr. Wyndham, whose old feeling of respect and friendship for the colonel and his son was not without its effect upon him at the present moment, though it was evident it was not without an effort that he spoke.

Mr. James Murray, who might now be almost regarded as one of the family, had in the meantime left the room, without any special notice or remark, except from the general, who said:

'What, has Mr. Murray gone already?'

'Oh no,' replied Mr. Wyndham, with something like confusion: 'he has only gone into the other room to see my wife and daughter, I dare say; so come on, gentlemen, we will go too, and see if they can contrive to give us anything for lunch after all this.'

'Oh, no lunch for me, Mr. Wyndham,' said the general, as he followed the host; 'I

cannot stay now to avail myself of your kindness. I must only say "How d'ye do" to the ladies, and be off.'

'Mr. Wyndham will excuse me also, I know,' said the colonel; 'as this affair has quite upset my dear wife, and I am anxious to get back and let her know it's all over.'

'Patrick,' said the captain, addressing his servant, who had stepped into the hall to wait his master's orders, 'you can stay in the hall till we come out. We shall not be many minutes.'

'Yes, yer honor,' replied Patrick, drawing himself up and giving a military salute; 'I shall walk sentry till yer honor returns.'

When they entered the sitting-room, where Mr. Wyndham expected to find his wife and daughter, neither of them was there, and he went off to inform them of the presence of the visitors. In a few minutes he returned with Mrs. Wyndham, who, having in the meantime been hastily and partially informed by her husband of the cause of the long inquiry, received her guests very cordially, and apologised for her daughter, who, she said, had been taken rather unwell, chiefly, she believed, on account of her anxiety during their inquiry into the attack

that had been made upon Mr. Murray the previous evening, and was unable to come downstairs and see her old friends.

'I am sorry to hear it,' said the general, who had already heard something of the intended marriage between that young lady and Mr. Murray, 'and grieve very much that anything should have occurred so painful to her feelings.'

'Poor Blanche!' said the colonel, kindly. 'I sincerely hope and trust she will soon be better.'

'Thank you, colonel, I've no doubt but she will,' replied the mother, perhaps not altogether pleased with the colonel's tone, which probably she thought implied sympathy for more than her daughter's present indisposition.

Mr. James Murray did not again make his appearance during the stay of the visitors.

CHAPTER X.

'Now, colonel,' said General Fielden, as they left Mr. Wyndham's house, 'I am going with you and your son to pay my respects to Mrs. Haverty.'

'She will be delighted to see you,' replied the colonel heartily, 'and I can almost forgive that Mr. James Murray for all the anxiety and annoyance he has caused both my dear wife and myself, as well as my son, since it has been the means of conferring upon us the honour and pleasure of a visit from yourself.'

'Well, it has not spoilt your politeness and good-humour, at all events, though it almost made me forget mine once or twice,' returned the general.

'Upon my word, it was as much as I could do to keep my temper and restrain myself,' exclaimed the colonel.

'That man of yours, captain, seems an original,' remarked the general to William Haverty, who was walking at one side of him, Patrick bringing up the 'rear behint,' as he called it.

'Yes, general, but as honest and faithful a creature, I believe, as ever breathed, and as brave as a lion,' replied the captain.

'You have no doubt, I suppose, but Murray attacked him first?'

'None whatever. With all his utter indifference to danger, he is one of the most peaceable and best-tempered fellows in the world.'

'He certainly does not look a quarrelsome fellow at all; and he gave his account of the whole affair so disingenuously and with so little hesitation that it was impossible to doubt the truth of what he said. I was so amused, too, with his laying claim to the character of a soldier—though a splendid soldier he would make—and his dignified look and tone as he called himself "an Irishman and a soldier," like the Thracian robber who told Alexander that he was 'a Thracian and a soldier!'

'I believe he was a soldier at one time till his late master bought his discharge, and he

would have been one again if I had not chanced to have him recommended to me as a servant, and engaged him,' remarked Captain Haverty.

'There was no mistaking the first part of his assertion, at all events, was there, colonel?' said General Fielden, with a smile.

'Oh no! The first sound of that tongue of his would betray his country among a thousand voices,' cried the colonel, laughing, who himself still retained much of both the accent and manner, as well as the high spirits, of the 'Green Island.'

'You don't seem to have a very exalted opinion of that witness of Mr. Murray's—Bilston, I think his name is,' remarked the captain, addressing General Fielden.

'No; I believe that fellow is a great blackguard,' said the general decisively. 'I've had my suspicions about him for some time. He is always prowling and lurking about that dark narrow foot-path behind his garden at night, and several robberies have taken place in that neighbourhood lately, and, as I said before, I know him to be a most inveterate poacher. He is not at all a man of good character, and it is well for you that you were prepared, or you might have found

to your own experience what sort of rascal he is before this.'

'Certainly my man was more alive to the danger of the spot than I was,' said the captain. 'I wonder Mr. Murray should have brought forward a man of that kind as a witness, especially as he could prove nothing as to the assault he pretended had been made upon him.'

'I suppose my worthy brother magistrate,' replied the general, with a slight sneer, 'was not aware that I knew so much about the fellow. But it is said Mr. Murray has more acquaintance with him than is altogether usual or becoming, considering the difference between their positions.'

'Indeed! You don't think he goes shares with him in his spoils, do you?' said the captain, laughing.

'No; but I am told he goes shares with him in some of his domestic enjoyments,' returned the general mysteriously.

'Whew!' cried the colonel, with a sound between a long low whistle and an exclamation of surprise.

'Surely it cannot be true,' said the captain seriously.

'I am very much afraid it is, though. I

saw his horse standing there myself one evening about dusk a short time ago, and have been told by one or two others who have seen the same.'

'Well, that looks very suspicious, certainly,' replied William, shocked to think of the sort of husband poor Blanche Wyndham was doomed to have.

'And I have heard, too, that he is about to marry Miss Wyndham,' remarked the general. 'Is that true?' he asked, looking at the captain.

'It is reported so,' he replied, in vain trying to conceal his internal agitation and uneasiness.

'Then I am sorry for her, poor girl! I always thought she had better taste and more good sense than to have chosen such a man as Murray for a husband, who is nearly twice her age into the bargain, I should say,' rejoined the general.

'I doubt very much if he is her own choosing,' said the colonel quietly.

'Why, captain, I always thought you stood first on the list there with both the young lady and her parents. That fellow hasn't gone and supplanted you during your absence, has he?'

Poor William Haverty felt this much more keenly than the good-hearted general either expected or intended. Fortunately he was spared any further embarrassment and pain from the bantering of the general, as well as the necessity of any reply, by approaching, at the moment, the door of his father's house.

Mrs. Haverty, whose anxiety and uneasiness on account of her son had been intense, even distressing, during the absence of her husband, saw their return with no small degree of pleasure, and received General Fielden with much evident cordiality and satisfaction, who laughingly gave her a brief account of the lengthened inquiry in which he had been engaged, and concluded with saying that for his part he was very glad of it, for it had not only informed him of the return of her son, but had given him an opportunity of thus early paying his respects to her and congratulating both her and her husband on so auspicious an event, and also of welcoming the gallant and distinguished captain to the home of his youth and the heart of his esteemed parents. 'How long are you to stay, captain?' he inquired, turning to our hero.

'Not long, I—I expect,' replied the captain, with repressed feelings and embarrassment.

'Oh, William, don't say that,' exclaimed his mother, with a tender, half-chiding glance. 'Now that this terrible war is over I hope you won't have to go out of the country again.'

'I'm afraid, mother, you would have a poor opinion of me as a soldier if I were content to remain at home idle while my country had use for me elsewhere,' returned her son.

'Well, your country does not require your services at present, does it?' argued the mother, 'now that peace has been made. I hope we shall have no more war to take you away.'

'I have but little confidence in the peace, mother, and doubt much if it lasts long,' returned the son in the same affectionate and respectful tone.

'You don't think it is a sound or a safe peace?' remarked General Fielden.

'I confess I do not. It is a piece of patchwork which may last for a short time, or even a few years, but I don't believe it will be permanent.'

'I do not think myself we ought to have been content to leave the question for which we went into the war to remain in so unsatisfactory a position as it still is. In fact, as far as the aggressive and encroaching tendencies of Russia are concerned, we might just as well never have gone to war at all, for all the check that has been put upon her. In a few years she will be just as strong as ever in the Black Sea, and perhaps even more dangerous to Turkey than she has been,' replied the general.

'I am quite of your opinion, general,' said the colonel. 'We have sacrificed an enormous amount of both valuable treasure and still more valuable lives without attaining, as far as I can see, one single object for which the war was undertaken; and had the ministry either possessed or shown the slightest amount of either ability or courage before the Emperor Nicholas invaded Turkey, he never would have attempted it. But forgetting, or not knowing, the spirit and power of the British people, he counted upon the weakness and pliancy of a feeble ministry, whose interests were not less bound up in keeping peace with him, than their incapaci-

ties for governing a nation disqualified them for carrying on a war; and, having deceived himself by thinking he had successfully excited sufficient jealousy and mistrust between this country and France, he thought it was a favourable opportunity to carry out his long-cherished scheme of destroying the Turkish power and turning Constantinople into a Russian capital or Muscovite dependency.'

'I find your opinion of the ministry has not improved,' said the general, smiling.

'No, nor ever will, I'm afraid.'

'Well, let us hope that this peace which your friends in office have given us will be more lasting than we think,' returned General Fielden.

'I hope it will. I don't want my son to be called away again while we are here,' said Mrs. Haverty fervently.

'But you would not wish your son to be always at home with you, Mrs. Haverty?' asked the general in a friendly, cheerful tone. 'You are a truer soldier's wife, as well as a soldier's mother, than that, I know.'

'You are quite right,' said the colonel. 'My dear wife has too much regard for both her son's and her old-fashioned husband's

honour to wish William to neglect his duty to his country when it has any need of his services; and I know he, with all his love and regard for his parents, has too high a sense of his own honour and duties to allow any private feelings to detain him at home if again called upon to leave us. But, thanks be to God, there's no immediate appearance of it, at all events.'

'Well, I don't know, father,' returned the son. 'There was some talk before we left the Crimea, and I heard it again in London, that our regiment might possibly be sent out to India in the spring, for service there.'

'Oh, I hope not, William!' exclaimed his mother.

'I shouldn't mind if we were,' he replied, with just the smallest possible tone of his internal grief and disappointment betraying itself in his voice. 'There's much more chance of seeing some active service there, as well as of advancement, than there is now at home, since this war is finished.'

'Oh, don't talk of active service and advancement, as if you preferred them to your old mother and father!' said the old lady, with a sort of half-sorrowful laugh.

'There is nothing on earth, mother, that I

prefer to that; but I should scarcely be much credit to my parents if I didn't wish to follow the path of honour and duty, which I know *they* would never allow any private feelings of their own, however sorrowful, to turn *them* from,' replied William, affectionately.

'There, now, that's spoken like a brave soldier as well as a dutiful son, captain,' interrupted the general, cheerfully and kindly; 'but as you haven't received orders to start yet, your good mother may keep up her heart for the present.'

'And if you ever should go, I hope old Sir Colin Campbell will go with you,' remarked the colonel.

'I hope so too,' replied William. 'Old as he is, I would sooner be under his command than that of any other man in the British army.'

'Ay, a fine old soldier he is!' said the general, warmly; 'and depend upon it, if any great emergency were to arise to-morrow, in which the government were suddenly called upon to entrust the honour and safety of the country to our army, Sir Colin Campbell would be the man who would be chosen to lead that army.'

'Nor do I believe there is a man the army

would sooner follow,' said the captain, earnestly.

'Perhaps he would not be inclined to go out to India at his time of life,' suggested the colonel; 'though I do not for an instant suppose he would allow that or any other personal consideration to deter him from going anywhere, or from encountering any danger or fatigue, if he believed his country really required his services. I know the gallant old fellow too well for that!'

'Ay, and so do I, Haverty. And even if we had forgotten our own campaigning days, that dashing feat of the old fellow who scaled the cliffs of Alma so lately, at the head of his gallant followers, is too fresh in our memories to allow us to imagine either his spirit or his energies have failed him since we parted company with him at Bordeaux forty years ago. Such an affair as that, colonel, makes one's hands itch to be at work again. Why, I would have given ten years' pay to be present at such a sight as that!' exclaimed the general, enthusiastically.

'Ah, general, you and I, I'm afraid, must prepare ourselves and buckle on our armour for a yet more arduous fight than ever we

have yet encountered,' replied the colonel, seriously.

'Ay, you're right,' returned the general, with a grave smile; 'and let us trust to the merits and skill of our Commander, and do our duty like true men, as we have always done, and rely upon Him for the victory. But come,' he added, after a brief pause, 'although, like good soldiers, we must never allow ourselves to be surprised by the enemy, or attacked unprepared, I hope the closing struggle of the campaign is not approaching just yet.'

'No, not for many years, I hope!' exclaimed the colonel, with his usual gay spirits, as the general rose to take his departure, who said, as he shook his old friend and his wife by the hand, that he should expect them and their son to come and see him at his house in a day or two.

'Good-morning, captain,' said he, shaking hands with William, who walked down the road with him and saw him out at the gate; 'remember I shall expect you within a couple of days.'

'We shall endeavour to avail ourselves of the pleasure of paying our respects to you by that time,' replied the captain, returning the

hearty pressure of the fine old soldier, as he turned back to the house of his parents ; and the general went on, calmly and cheerfully, to his own now solitary home—for wife, sons, and daughters, one by one, had been all taken from him, till he was left alone in the world to finish his journey by himself, though sustained and cheered by the consciousness of having done his duty to the best of his ability in whatever position it had pleased Providence to place him ; by the respect and kindliest sympathy of all who knew him, and still more by the calm, humble, patient hope of being one day re-united to those he had loved and lost, and whose memories he still secretly cherished with the most lively affection, in another and a better world, where they should never more be parted, but live for ever in the felicity of eternal communion with each other, and with Him who, for His own mysterious purpose, had thought fit to call them away before him, and leave him alone in the world to 'finish his course' by himself, which, like a true soldier and a good Christian, he neither shrank from nor murmured at, but submitted to with the patience and resignation of one who feels and believes that, whatever trials God pleases to

send, they are those best adapted to discipline the mind and prepare the heart for that inheritance which never passeth away, and for the attainment of that crown which never fadeth—eternal in the heavens.

CHAPTER XI.

During the time that Patrick O'Brien was waiting for his master in Bilford Hall, one of the servants, a middle-aged female, with a sharp, intelligent, though good-natured expression of countenance, once or twice passed close to him, apparently in the performance of some household duties, though what they were Patrick was rather at a loss to make out, and each time she gave a sort of half-anxious, half-timid look, as if she wished to speak to him, but was either afraid or did not know how to begin.

Now Patrick O'Brien was the very soul of gallantry itself, and was by no means overburdened with bashfulness in the presence of a tolerably good-looking female face, even though past the first bloom of youth. He therefore speedily made up his mind to

challenge her, as he would have called it, without delay, and accordingly did so the next time she passed.

'Good-mornin' to ye,' said he, with a sort of half-courteous, half-familiar military salute, as she was passing him for the fourth time within as many minutes: 'I hope I have the honour of seein' ye well.'

'Yes, thank you,' said the domestic, stopping, with a slightly embarrassed look.

'Sure, now, an' it's mysilf that's glad to hear it,' replied Patrick, as if the subject was one in which he felt the liveliest interest; 'an' I hope their honors, the gintleman an' the lady, are the same, now.'

'Yes, master and missus is both well, thank you,' returned the maid, still looking slightly confused.

'An' the young lady—sure an' I hope she's well,' said Patrick, hazarding an inquiry, with the object rather of trying to discover whether there was a young lady or not, which he strongly suspected there was, to whom his master might be attached, than that he felt particularly interested in the matter on his own account.

'Oh, then, you know about Miss Blanche, do you!' exclaimed the damsel, in a low voice,

who was no other than that young lady's late nursemaid, and now faithful attendant, Eliza Fleming.

'Och, an' why shouldn't I have heared o' the dear young lady?' returned Patrick, evasively, plainly seeing that there was something to follow.

'Are you Captain Haverty's man?' inquired Eliza, abruptly, after a moment's pause.

'Sure an' it's mysilf, Patrick O'Brien, that's proud to say so,' he replied, gaily.

'And your master has told you about Miss Blanche?' said Eliza, in an inquiring tone, not without something of surprise in it.

'Sure now, an' ye don't think that his honor would so demane hissilf an' the young lady too—bless her sweet face!—as to talk about her to his sarvent, do ye?' said Patrick, half chidingly.

'How did you know anything about them—I mean about her, then?' inquired Eliza, with a surprised look.

'Och, wasn't it mysilf, now, that suspicted that same that ye've jist tould me?' returned Patrick with a suppressed laugh, while Eliza looked at him as if half offended at having had her secret so suddenly drawn from her.

'Well,' then, said she, after a moment's confused pause, 'as you've found it out I may just as well tell you all about it. But mind, if you go and tell Captain Haverty one word of what I say, I'll never speak to you again, as that would make my dear young mistress unhappy.'

'Och, an' ye may be aisy on that point,' said Patrick, in a confidential tone; 'Patrick O'Brien isn't the boy to deprive himsilf o' that same plaisure, or to make a dear young lady unhappy by turnin' thraitor to yoursilf now.'

'Then,' said Eliza, speaking in a low, earnest tone, and glancing round to see that no one was within hearing, 'it's a great shame of master and missus, it is, to go and make Miss Blanche marry that Mr. James Murray.'

'Sure an ye don't mane that same, do ye?' exclaimed Patrick, in surprise.

'Yes, but I do, though,' returned Eliza indignantly; 'and I say it again, it's a cruel shame, as she doesn't like him herself, and thinks so much of someone else, who was to have had her, and who still loves her so, too.'

'Och, sure an' it is,' said Patrick, who

in an instant comprehended the whole affair.

'I wish Captain Haverty or somebody else had killed him altogether last night,' said Eliza impassionately; 'the bad, cruel man! And I know he doesn't care anything for her either, the dear angel. It's only the money he comes after.'

'Now, by my soul, if I had known that same before I should jist ha' given him such a skinful o' broken bones to carry home with him last night as would ha' previnted him from throublin' you with his ugly prisence again for some time, bad luck to him!' said Patrick energetically.

'What, was it you, then, that gave him the beating in the lane last night?' exclaimed Eliza, staring at Patrick.

'Sure an' it was. You didn't think that Patrick O'Brien was the boy to let his masther dirty his hands wi' tachin' an unmannerly spalpeen like him how to behave himsilf? No, no; Patrick knows his duty too well for that.'

'Then I wish you had killed him altogether, or at least done something to him that would have prevented him ever coming here again,' said Eliza Fleming bitterly.

'By the powers! if I had sain his ugly carcase at Sebastopoul I shouldn't ha' throubled mysilf much about that same; but I'm afraid they'd call it murther if I were to do it in this counthry,' replied Patrick, as if sorry he could not oblige her by carrying out her wish.

'Why, of course they would,' said Eliza, half frightened. 'I didn't mean you to kill him outright; I only meant to keep him from coming after my young missus again. But if I were your master I would circumvent him yet.'

'Sure, now, ye may laive that same circumvintin' to me. I'm jist the lad to circumvint a villain like him whin I mait him,' returned Patrick, whose notion of circumventing a man was to knock him down. 'Ounly give me anither chance, an' see if I don't circumvint the cowardly spalpeen with a vingeance.'

'Will you?' exclaimed Eliza anxiously.

'Ay, sure an' I will!' replied Patrick unhesitatingly.

'Well, my dear young missus, who's the sweetest angel that ever was,' said Eliza enthusiastically, 'is going to be forced to marry that man agin her will, if somebody I know doesn't come forward and—and——'

'Circumvint him,' said O'Brien, who had taken quite a fancy to the word, interrupting the fervid undertones of the damsel.

'Just so,' said Eliza; 'and the dear young angel is so upset about the affair to-day, too, as she was afraid they were going to do something to your young master to make him go away again, that the other might have it all his own way.'

'Och, be aisy about that, you may. Patrick O'Brien is not the lad to let his masther be brought into throuble, though. What for am I engaged as a sarvint to a gintleman like his honor, but to look afther him and take care o' him? Laive that to me now, an' see if I don't circumvint that same villain, niver belaive the word o' Patrick O'Brien agin!'

'If you do I shall pray for you every day of my life,' said Eliza, with a gush of gratitude. 'And the dear young lady will be so grateful too, for she's a'most broken-hearted at the thought of having to marry one she doesn't like. I tell you what it is, I know they're going to kill her,' she added with a shudder.

'Och, the murtherin' villains! Why don't ye go and spake to the gintleman, the magis-

thrate, an' ask him to have another crowner's requaist beforehand?'

'I don't mean that they are doing right-down murder; but they may just as well. Besides, they don't hold inquests on people till they are dead,' said Eliza.

'Och, botheration! what's the use o' houldin' a requaist upon a person's body when they're dead?' said Patrick, with a contemptuous look. 'Sure an' it's no use thin, at all, at all.'

'Then I'll depend upon you to circumvent them; and mind, not a word to anybody,' said Eliza, moving away, as a bell at that moment rang. 'That's my young lady's bell; I must just run upstairs and see what she wants, but I shan't be a minute;' and away she went with a lightened heart at the prospect of being able to 'circumvent' the design of Mr. James Murray to marry her mistress.

In a few minutes she returned, and, walking close up to O'Brien, she slipped a letter into his hand, and, with a mysterious look, whispered to him to put it into his pocket and give it to his master, with which he instantly complied, and promised to do.

'Hush!' said she, putting her forefinger

to her lips, 'they're coming out. I must not let them see me a-talking to you. Good-bye, and don't forget your promise.'

'Sure an' I won't. Patrick O'Brien is not the boy to forget the way to circumvint a villain an' sarve a young lady,' he replied fervidly, at the same time drawing himself up into a more erect military posture than he had assumed during the conversation.

'Och, by the powers!' mused O'Brien to himself, as he walked along a short distance behind his master, Colonel Haverty, and General Fielden, after they left the house of the Wyndhams, 'here's a purty paice of business ye've takin' in hand to do, Patrick O'Brien. Ye've promised to circumvint a gintleman—och, no, divil a bit o' him is a gintleman, the murtherin' blackguard! Well, Masther Patrick,' he muttered apostrophisingly to himself, 'ye've promised to circumvint this same cowardly spalpeen the first time ye mait him. But be aisy now, in case ye get yoursilf into throuble again an' dishonour the sarvice. An' I'm niver to tell my masther anything about it, either! Sure an' it isn't likely I was goin' to tell his honor anything about that, at all, at all, whin I know he'd say to me: "Patrick, ye

blackguard!" — no, he wouldn't say that either, for he niver swears at me. Well, then, I know he'd say, "Patrick O'Brien, ye must laive that same circumvintin' alone. Ye'll disgrace the sarvice an' get yersilf into throuble. Ye must laive it alone. It won't do at all, at all." That's what he'd say, but he shan't know till it's all over. By the powers, an' he shan't! An' this same letther, too; I wonder what's in it! Let me look at the outside. Sure an' I can't read it, at all, at all. An' why should ye, ye Irish blackguard, whin ye niver was larned?' he again muttered to himself. 'Hush!' he whispered, shaking the letter and holding it to his ear, 'let me listen to see if I can hear the sound o' anything. I hope there's nothin' in it about the circumvintion business. Och! divil a bit o' the sound o' a word in that same letther do I hear at all. Sure an' I hope it isn't a *carte blanc*—blank cartridge, I suppose that manes,' he said, as he replaced it in his pocket and walked on to be ready to open the gate leading to the house for the 'gintry,' as he called them to himself, as they went in; after which he made his way to the kitchen to give an account there of the morning's proceedings, and to tell how he

had 'circumvinted' Mr. James Murray the night before, but to say nothing about his future intentions respecting that same gentleman, or about the letter he had for his master, which he was now anxious to find an early opportunity of giving to him.

CHAPTER XII.

Patrick O'Brien was on the look-out for his master when he walked down the path to see General Fielden out at the gate, and presented himself before him just as he was again approaching the house.

'Well, Patrick,' said the captain, as his servant drew himself up by the side of a thick, bushy cluster of large laurels, where he had taken his stand, and which quite screened him from being seen from the house, giving his master a very formal, military salute, at the same time looking in a grave kind of half-important, half-respectful manner peculiar to himself—'Well, Patrick,' said the captain, suspecting from his manner that he had something to say to him, but thought it was only about the morning's inquiry, 'these countrymen of ours that we have been fight-

ing for haven't given us the most pleasing reception on our return home.'

'Sure an' they haven't, yer honor,' replied Patrick, whose look showed he was not at the moment thinking of that. 'But I wish to spake to yer honor for a moment, if I may be so bould,' he added, in an abrupt, confused manner.

'Of course you may, Patrick. What is it?' said his master, with a smile, wondering what he was going to say.

'Plaise, yer honor, I've got a despatch for ye,' replied Patrick, taking the letter out of his pocket, and presenting it in the most military fashion.

'A despatch, Patrick! What do you mean?' asked the captain, with a slight start of surprise, his first thought being that Mr. James Murray had entrusted him with the delivery of a challenge. 'It's a letter. Who is it from?' he inquired, without looking at the address.

'Plaise, yer honor, it's saicret sarvice; an' my orders were to deliver it, but to say nothing.'

'But you ought not to take in hand the delivery of any letter or message either, Patrick, that you are ashamed to say who it

comes from,' said his master, still more certain about its being a challenge.

'Sure now, an' it isn't ashamed that I am at all, at all,' returned Patrick.

'Well, you had better take it back again, and tell the person who gave it you that I cannot receive or recognise any communication that comes to me through such a channel,' said the captain, holding out the letter to his servant, without even looking at the direction. 'Any communication of the kind of which I suppose this is, must come in the usual manner and form, and then it shall have notice. There, take the note.'

'Sure an' yer honor isn't displaised at Patrick for trying to sarve a young lady?' said he, penitently.

'A young lady! Why didn't you say so?' exclaimed Captain Haverty, eagerly. 'I thought it was from somebody else,' he added, as he glanced at the address of the note, and instantly recognised the handwriting of Blanche Wyndham. 'You should have told me, Patrick,' turning and preparing to break the seal, while his heart throbbed and his hand shook as if he had been suddenly seized with paralysis.

'Sure an' yer honor wouldn't ha' wished

me to break my word, afther promisin' to keep it a saicret!' urged Patrick, who saw that his master was more agitated than he wished to show, and walked away, relieved in his mind that he had at length succeeded in getting rid of the responsibility of keeping the note in his possession.

Instead of immediately opening the letter, William Haverty, after holding it a minute or two in his hand, as he walked toward a more retired part of the garden, put it into his pocket, and endeavoured to compose his agitation a little before he attempted to read it, wondering much and fearfully upon its contents. But instead of this calming or controlling his internal excitement, it only increased it. Again taking the letter from his pocket, he paused behind some thick evergreens, and, breaking the seal, read as follows :

'I know not by what unfortunate accident you have been brought into contact with Mr. James Murray, or if you really have been in any way concerned in the attack that he says was made upon him last evening ; but if you have, and would avoid a great deal of annoyance, and perhaps danger to yourself, as well

as much painful anxiety to one who, I know, was once dear to you, and who would now gladly lay down her life to make you happy, do not remain in the neighbourhood, for there is one whose jealous hatred, I know, will stop at no means within his power, or that a cruel, evil mind can employ, to injure both you and everyone who speaks or thinks well of you. O God! that I should feel that it is only justice to another to write this of one destined to be my h—— No, I cannot write the word! But oh, William, by all the happy recollections of our past days; by all the hopes we once cherished of a bright future, as you value your own prospects in life, and the happiness of your dear old parents, do not allow any thoughts connected with me either to keep you in this neighbourhood, or to render you permanently unhappy; and do not, I implore you, increase my misery by compelling me to look upon the suffering I have caused you!

'I have long striven against the doom that is destined for me; and I had hoped that your return home might have induced my parents to alter their determination respecting me. But alas! it is all in vain. I find that your return has only increased both their

resolution and that of him to whom they are determined to sacrifice me, to have the dreadful union completed at once; and I cannot, I dare not, disobey those to whom I owe my existence, even though the effort to comply with their wishes cost me my life, which, alas! has now but little to make me regard it as a blessing. Yes, they shall be obeyed, if this already almost broken heart does not break first. Oh that it would break now, and put an end to all the unhappiness I am causing to others!

'But I must endeavour to stop; and yet when I think it is the last time I shall ever dare to write to you; that I must not, and dare not, receive any reply; and that we must never, never meet again, I feel as if it were cutting myself off from my only happiness in closing this letter! Do not, therefore, try to see me. It would only aggravate that which is almost death to me to endure. Try to forget me. Seek to find one more deserving of the love of a heart such as yours; and may your name and happiness be honoured and flourishing long after she whose trembling hand pens these lines is laid in the cold, cold grave, on this side of which she can never more hope for one ray of

happiness, and to which she now looks forward and longs for, as the only relief from a life of impending wretchedness.

'Farewell! May He who has thought fit to separate us from each other, keep, prosper, and bless you! May you attain all the happiness your noble, generous nature so well merits; and that you may not judge harshly of one whose heart is still faithful—alas! too faithful for her own peace of mind—but whose duty compels her to forego all hopes of ever sharing with you that felicity of which she so long and fondly dreamed, is now all that is asked by your own beloved and still devoted

'BLANCHE.

'P.S.—I have just learned that you have foiled the present attempt of *that man* to injure you. Thank God for it! But do not be deceived, and think he will not try it again if he can find any possible means of doing so. He will never rest, while you are in the neighbourhood, till he has found some way of carrying out his designs against your safety and happiness. Once more, farewell! I am afraid you will scarcely be able to read this, as my hand shakes and my head swims

so that I can with difficulty either hold my pen or see what I am writing. Again, God bless you and keep you for ever and ever!'

Such was the letter our hero received from Blanche Wyndham. It had evidently been written with great difficulty, and, from the slight stains still discernible upon the paper, not without tears—bitter, hopeless, and desolating tears! There was a confusion, too, in it which showed that the thoughts had been hurriedly put down just as they had risen in the mind of the writer, who had in vain endeavoured to subdue the emotions of her heart while penning it.

For some moments after reading the letter he stood motionless, as if in a dream. His whole mind was overcome by a confused kind of stupor, which seemed to destroy all power of motion, thought, or consciousness. At length a sudden flutter of a bird, in the laurels behind, startled him into recollection and consciousness, and, hastily folding up the letter, he replaced it in his pocket, and walked on through the garden and gravel walks of the little shrubbery, heart-stunned and bewildered at the position and unavoidable calamity of losing for ever Blanche Wynd-

ham! Yes, her own hand had conveyed to him the fatal intelligence that she was soon to become another's, and that all his hopes must be for ever abandoned! and had even denied him the opportunity of making one last appeal to her heart—one last effort to achieve that happiness he had so long and fondly hoped for. Yes, he must now regard Blanche Wyndham as utterly and irretrievably lost!

For a few seconds this thought almost took away his breath. His heart throbbed, his breast heaved with an intensity of agony that only stronger natures and nobler minds can feel in moments of suffering. The pliant willow will yield before a puff of wind, and in another moment return to its accustomed place; but the proud oak, which bends not before the fiercest hurricane, when once rent can never more return to its original position, but must remain scarred and disfigured till the axe or the saw lays its glory in the dust. So it is with men of deeper and grander characters. The scars which in others will heal and be forgotten almost as soon as they are received, will in them continue to be living, unhealable sources of anguish and grief while sensibility itself exists.

Poor William Haverty felt this blow with all the terrible power of a strong and impassioned nature; and though he had before almost felt that his hopes were doomed to be blighted, now that the absolute fact stared him in the face, he could not look upon it but with a degree of anguish which for the moment prostrated every energy of both mind and body.

But William Haverty was not the man to allow any wounds, however deeply they might have penetrated his heart, to have any lengthened perceptible effect upon his outward appearance. With a powerful effort he forced back within himself the agony that had for a few moments exhibited itself in his trembling lips, pallid cheeks, and agitated frame, and with very little trace of the emotion that had so lately shaken him to the very soul, he walked on and re-entered the house, and went up to his own room to prepare for dinner, where he again took out the letter, and, seating himself before the fire which had been lighted in his dressing-room, once more slowly perused its contents.

'So you think Mr. James Murray will try to do me some injury, do you?' he muttered, with a contemptuous curl of his lip, apostro-

phisingly. 'Humph! Let him! But he's too great a coward to venture upon anything against me that might endanger his asinine hide. And if he were not, William Haverty is not the man to shun him or the neighbourhood on that account. By Heaven! I wish I could provoke him to do something that would afford me an opportunity of giving him the chastisement he deserves—though such a contemptible hound is hardly worth the soiling of my hands upon. And yet this is the fellow that, after all, Blanche Wyndham at length has consented to marry—at the command of her parents! Yes, she sees that it is her *duty* to obey them, and marry a man she pretends to dislike; and recommends me to seek some one else more worthy of my merits! Very kind of her to think of *me* so wisely!' he muttered, between his teeth, with bitter earnestness, and, after a pause, continued in the same half-audible tone of repressed bitterness and emotion, looking abstractedly into the fire before him: 'And you wish me to leave the neighbourhood too, because *you* feel ashamed to meet me after your unfaithfulness! And why should I leave my own home and the house of my parents to save *your* feelings, when you have

shown so little consideration for *mine?* Well, but for my love for my dear father and mother, I might comply with this—ay, and should, too, without an hour's delay! But rather to fly from the scenes of my vain hopes and ruined affection than to gratify you and your clownish intended. Oh that I had never returned! never known that she I had looked upon as the perfect embodiment of all that is noble, pure, affectionate, and truthful, had become—what? No!' he muttered, checking the increasing bitterness and agitation of his emotions and thoughts—'no! Blanche Wyndham cannot have become less than my fond heart believed her. I cannot think it! Forgive me, Blanche,' he said, again apostrophising the letter as if it had been herself: 'forgive me for my cruel thoughts. Poor Blanche! Oh, that I could save you from the life of wretchedness that is before you! and save your infatuated parents from the disappointment and regret they are blindly rushing into! They think Murray a grand match for their child, and are not only ignorant of the evident falseness of his position, but perhaps, too, of the unworthiness of his motives and his want of affection for their daughter. That exclama-

tion of his too truly told me this. He knows that her father has considerable property. This he is resolved, if possible, to get hold of; and then Blanche Wyndham will find the full effects of being married to a man incapable of appreciating or loving a noble woman and an affectionate heart. Poor Blanche!' he said, with a deep, mournful sigh. 'Oh that I could save you from this! Gladly and willingly would I sacrifice every feeling and emotion of my own heart—resign every cherished hope of happiness in life for myself, if I could only save you from this dreadful, wretched doom!'

For a minute William Haverty sat with his elbow resting on the side of the dressing-table, his hot, throbbing forehead in his hand, and almost choked by the intensity and agitation of his emotions. He felt crushed to the very heart, utterly broken-spirited and hopeless.

'O God!' he exclaimed, in the agony of his soul, 'why did not I perish amid so many thousands of my countrymen, instead of returning to such misery as this? They, perhaps, had those who would have wept with joy had they come home—and yet they fell! and I, who have escaped their happy fate, have come home to find that the brightest

hope which then sustained me must be given up for ever!'

Again did the stormy hurricane of passion and rage surge in his bosom, and once more did the memory of Blanche Wyndham, as he had seen her in their happier hours, and as, too, he had seen her crushed, heart-broken, and despairing that morning, come like a gentle vision upon his heart, and turn his angry agitation into the calm stillness of despondent sorrow and hopeless regret.

Again he read the fatal epistle, and still more did he lose sight of his own disappointment and grief in deep, disinterested, loveful commiseration and sympathy for poor Blanche; and again did he feel that he could willingly sacrifice every feeling and hope of his own to secure her happiness, and could have prayed in his heart for a blessing on her union with any other man that would have rendered her more happy than himself. But, alas! how different was the prospect now before her! The very idea was agonising to him. He thought he could already see his own bright, cheerful, and lovely Blanche Wyndham the drooping, neglected, heart-broken wife of a coarse, vulgar, pompous, selfish, overbearing coward, who scarcely ever treated her with

the courtesy due to a servant, and left her to pine in solitary wretchedness while he was enjoying his own sensual pleasures and coarse amusements elsewhere. And ought he not, he considered, instead of becoming passively acquiescent, do all in his power, for Blanche's own sake, to prevent such a fate as this from falling upon her?

Again the thought occurred to him—could her parents be really aware of the character of the man upon whom they were going to bestow their daughter's hand in marriage? And so entirely against her own wishes, too! He could not believe it. Was it not his duty, then, to make them acquainted with what he knew of it, and also with what he had so accidentally overheard the previous evening? But how was he to do this? Would they believe him if he did try to do so? Would they not rather suspect it was merely an invention of his own to prevent the marriage from taking place, that he might have the better chance of securing their daughter for himself? Yes, in all probability they would. Besides, he might possibly, after all, have not only a worse opinion of Mr. James Murray than was just: might he not have misunderstood the mean-

ing of what he heard, or perhaps even mistaken the words themselves altogether? He did not think so. Still, for Blanche's sake he began to wish he had: and from wishing, he hoped that he really had done so; and the generosity of his own nature would not allow him to cherish an evil opinion of anyone, however little reason he had to entertain a good one, if he once doubted its correctness or justice.

How long William Haverty might have continued in his state of brooding abstraction, had he not been disturbed, would perhaps be difficult to say; but just as his thoughts had arrived at this, if not more satisfactory, at least more charitable conclusion, a knock at his dressing-room door startled him into consciousness.

'Come in,' said he, hastily springing to his feet, and throwing off, as far as he could, all signs of his late agitation.

'Will yer honor be plaised to come down to dinner?' inquired Patrick, opening the door and presenting himself before his master with his usual military salute, at the same time giving a slight stare to see that he had been sitting with no other light than that of the fire, and that he was still in the same

state, as far as dressing was concerned, as he was before he came upstairs.

'Very well, Patrick; I shall be down in a minute,' replied the captain, throwing off his morning coat with an air of well-assumed cheerfulness and alacrity. 'But if dinner is up, say they had better not wait for me.'

'Sure an' it has been up for some time already, yer honor,' said Patrick; 'but his honor, Colonel Haverty, would not let you be sint for, expectin' ye to come down every minute. Shall I light the candle for yer honor to dress by?' inquired he, taking up a candlestick and candle that were standing on a chest of drawers in the room.

'Yes, you may, Patrick; and just get out my coat for me while I brush my hair a little. I have been so—so very busy, that I quite forgot about the time,' returned the captain, with some confusion, as he hastily washed his hands and began brushing his hair, with a despatch that threatened damage to the skin of his head; and in a couple of minutes more was on his way down to the dining-room, followed by his servant, who had his own secret thoughts and suspicions upon the subject of his master's long cogitation in his dressing-room.

'I beg your pardon, my dear mother,' said William Haverty, as he entered the room, 'for keeping you waiting so long; but I was so occupied upstairs that I quite forgot it was dinner-time. I am quite sorry and ashamed of having kept you and my father waiting for me.'

'Oh, never mind, William,' replied his mother, in her usual quiet, kind way. 'I am so happy to have you home again, and to see you with us, that I can't scold you, if even the things have got a little cold. You must be almost famished for the want of your dinner.'

'Oh, not at all; I had not even thought of it. But you and my father must want yours.'

'For these, and all His other mercies, may the Lord make us truly thankful, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen!' said the colonel, in a loud, earnest voice, throwing up his hands, suddenly interrupting his son, as they took their places at the table and prepared to commence operations.

'This is, even if a trifle cold, rather better fare than you used to have in the Crimea, William, I dare say,' remarked his father, as Patrick, who had already been installed, or rather had installed himself, into the office

and duties of butler, removed the cover from a beautiful roast sirloin of beef that had been placed before his master for him to carve.

'Ah! this looks glorious!' exclaimed William, with all the gusto of a man with a tolerably fair return of appetite, and who had not seen so tempting a joint for three years. 'Why, such a piece of beef would have created a mutiny in the camp this time last year!' he added, with a smile, as he stuck his fork into the meat, and the fine rich juice spurted out and mixed with the gravy.

'Well, I hope you'll enjoy it, and make a good dinner,' said his father, gaily.

'Ay, that I shall,' replied the son, who, for the time at least, felt in better spirits than he had done all day, and was anxious to conceal from his parents all appearance and indication of the disappointment and pain he had felt on account of Blanche Wyndham. He loved them too much to create any uneasiness in them by allowing them to know, or even suspect, how deeply he felt the prospect of losing her to whom his heart had been so long and tenderly attached, and without whom, his whole future life promised only to be a dreary, sad, objectless existence—without hope, sympathy, or happiness in the world,

beyond that of his own parents, and the few friends who knew and esteemed him for his many noble qualities and virtues; there is something more than this required to satisfy the craving for affection of the human heart. It is only that deep, earnest concentration of passion, pure, refined, and unchangeable, called love, mutually shared and reciprocated by a warm, tender, trusting, and congenial spirit, that can fill up and give the full measure of happiness sought for, and required by, every human soul, to give its full enjoyment to life and its objects. Without this a man may, and very often does, attain to both wealth and honour, power and distinction. But oh! without the appreciating smile of one tender, loving face; without the deep, glowing, sympathetic affection of one pure, devoted heart, how poor, valueless, and lifeless they all are! A man may conquer a kingdom, or earn riches enough to buy one; but if he has not one that he loves and prizes more than either his kingdom or his wealth, before whose feet to lay his crown, and with whom to share his possessions or his wealth, he is still a poor, miserable creature, deprived of the only source of happiness that these could bestow. But with that one faithful heart he may have

to struggle with difficulties and privations, trials and disappointments, and yet possess a joy and felicity that the other is an utter stranger to, and worth more, by a thousand times, than all the boasted glories of the one, or the grandeur and luxuries of the other—the imperishable love of a woman's heart!

CHAPTER XIII.

When William Haverty woke in the morning, the sad, depressing sense of lost love and happiness again fell heavily upon him; and the thought that Blanche Wyndham could never be his, lay like a weight on his heart, pressing it down into the depths of despair. In vain he tried to struggle against it and throw it off, for still heavier and heavier it sunk upon his spirits, with the chilling, cheerless sensation that the only object he had ever loved, or could love, was for ever lost to him. Now it was that he could appreciate the deep desolation of feeling of the almost broken heart, and he almost wished for the only relief which he, for the moment, thought could solace him—death. But the quiet, familiar tones of the church bells, suddenly falling upon his ears, imparted a soothing

and solemnising influence to his troubled spirit, and reproved the despondency that had again crept over him. The church—probably a quarter of a mile off—was sufficiently distant to take off that harshness which, in a closer proximity to the bell, might have had a less agreeable effect upon the ear, and yet sufficiently near to allow the sound to be heard clearly and distinctly by him; and he lay listening to it as if spell-bound.

What thoughts crowded in upon William's mind as he lay there, scarcely breathing lest he should destroy the magical influence of that sound. Nearly three years had elapsed since he had listened to it. What eventful, important years they had been in both his own life and that of his country! What dangers, privations, and sufferings had he, as well as his country, endured, and eventually triumphed over! And, while so many thousands of his countrymen had perished in the struggle, he had still been preserved and permitted to return to his home, and to listen to that bell calling the quiet villagers to early worship in the house of God!

Humbled, yet comforted, William Haverty rose from his bed and fervently thanked God

who had so mercifully preserved him amid so many dangers, and rose from his knees hopeful and refreshed in heart and spirit, and proceeded to dress himself, to join his father and mother at breakfast.

For the thirty years, or thereabouts, that Colonel Haverty had lived in Bilford, he had scarcely ever missed going to church once, if not twice, on the Sunday; and his wife had almost invariably gone with him. Never, perhaps, had they entered that sacred edifice with hearts more attuned to its holy services, with more sincere devotion and deep gratitude to Him whom they now approached, than they did on that Sunday, with their beloved son walking beside them, and every now and then, as they went along, receiving the hearty congratulations of their friends and neighbours on their son's safe return from the Crimean war.

Everyone knew and respected Colonel Haverty and his kind-hearted wife, and as they had to pass through a good portion of the village to get to the church, the welcomes the whole three received were neither few nor insincere, from not only the genteeler portion of its inhabitants and the few families they met who came from the more distant

parts of the parish, but from the small tradesmen and poorer population.

They arrived at the church just as the bell ceased ringing, and took their accustomed seats in their pew as the clergyman walked along the aisle from the vestry and took his place at the reading-desk to commence the service; about half-a-dozen awkward-looking youths, whom he had long been trying to drill into shape and train into choristers, following him and taking their places in a largish square pew near the pulpit, in the centre of which pew was a harmonium, to supply the want of an organ, at which a rather good-looking young lady was playing the customary voluntary while the people took their seats and prepared themselves for the services that were to follow.

It is not our intention to describe or attempt to describe these, or to intrude upon the sacred province of religious duties. Such a subject is alike too solemn and too difficult for the pen of the story-teller to venture upon, as we neither profess to have any special inspiration of our own upon the subject, nor have any doctrine to enunciate different from that taught and practised by the majority of religious teachers and people.

During the service, the young lady who played the harmonium appeared to attract rather more attention from a sallow-complexioned, large-nosed, dark, bushy-and-carefully-trimmed-whiskered, youngish man, perhaps about five or six and twenty, who occupied an adjoining pew, than was either altogether agreeable to herself or becoming in the person who bestowed it, and who seemed much more intent on watching her motions, and more anxious to catch her glance, than interested in any other part of the service or performance. This was Mr. James Ingram, son of Mr. John Ingram, of Ingram and Day's Bank, in Westdon, and junior partner in that firm.

He was a young man of great pretensions to fashionable life—especially in the cut of his coat, the shape of his trousers, and his other articles of dress—and also in his imitation of its fastness. He was married to a quiet, amiable woman, who was well worthy of a better husband, for whom he cared nothing, and looked upon as merely something he might amuse himself with when it suited his fancy, or when he had nothing else to do, and who had borne him two or three children, for whom he seemed to have about

the same regard as he had for their mother. He had, especially of late, taken a good deal of interest in the musical part of the service; and his wife, from rather delicate health, seldom coming to church with him, he had even volunteered to assist in the choral performance, and take his seat, next to the young lady already alluded to, in the large pew where the choristers sat, all of whom, of course, looked upon him as a perfect miracle of gentility and condescension.

He was also a particular friend of Mr. James Murray.

Mr. James Ingram was a person William Haverty had never liked, and had that instinctive aversion, not unmixed with contempt, for him that a real, genuine, open, high-toned, gentlemanly heart always feels for assumption, affectation, and impertinence. Nor was his father's opinion and feelings towards Mr. James Ingram much more favourable, though politeness always induced the colonel to treat him with the courtesy and respect due to their respective positions, as well as on account of his being a neighbour and resident in the parish.

CHAPTER XIV.

As Captain Haverty, with his father and mother, was leaving the church, after having shaken hands with, and spoken to, one of two friends and acquaintances, and received their congratulations on his return home, Mr. James Ingram strutted up to him for the same purpose.

'Ha! Mr. William, how do? So you have got safe home again,' said he, in a tone of affected familiarity and importance.

'Yes, you see I have, Mr. Ingram,' returned William Haverty, with a quiet, half-amused, half-satirical smile at the air and manner of the strutting little piece of vulgar self-importance before him, in a sort of round, loose monkey-jacket, fashionably cut, and very wide trousers, heavy, thick-soled Bal-

moral boots, and high, narrow-crowned French hat.

Having shaken hands with Colonel and Mrs. Haverty, Mr. James Ingram, whose house was in the same direction, and not far from theirs, turned to join Captain Haverty and his parents in their walk home from church.

'So your son has contrived to escape the bullets of the Russians, Mrs. Haverty,' said he, addressing that lady.

'Well, I am glad to say, though he did not escape altogether, that he has at least been able to return to us in safety,' replied Mrs. Haverty, quietly.

'I'm glad to know it is so. Ah, he was a wise man to take care of himself,' returned Mr. James Ingram, with a kind of half-impertinent air of commendation.

'I don't know that my son took any special care to shield himself from the bullets of the Russians more than what was his duty, Mr. Ingram,' said the colonel, rather coldly.

'Oh, I didn't mean that, colonel,' returned Mr. Ingram, slightly confused; 'only Mr. William has been more fortunate than you were.'

'It has pleased Almighty God to protect

him from a similar loss certainly, but it is due rather to His goodness than my son's care of himself,' rejoined the colonel in a tone of hearty earnestness, though with a slight glance of rebuke at Mr. Ingram.

'Ay, quite right, colonel,' said the latter, with affected seriousness; 'and I'm glad Mr. William has been so lucky——'

'My son is Captain Haverty, sir,' said the colonel, rather impatient of the flippant repetition of the 'Mr. William' of Mr. James Ingram.

'I beg your pardon, colonel,' replied that gentleman with assumptuous regret, even more offensive to both the colonel and his son than his pert familiarity. 'I had forgotten that Mr. William had been fortunate enough to get a little promotion since he was last here. Allow me to congratulate him upon it. Though he hasn't been so fortunate in another quarter, I hear,' he added with an affected shrug. 'But we mustn't expect to have it all our own way, you know,' said he, appealing to the colonel, who merely gave him a slight, somewhat cold stare of incomprehension.

'To what do you allude, Mr. Ingram?' inquired Captain Haverty rather stiffly, although he pretty well suspected his mean-

ing, as his father and mother walked slowly on a little in advance.

'What! haven't you heard, then, that your old sweetheart, Miss Wyndham, is going to be married to Mr. James Murray?' exclaimed Mr. Ingram with feigned surprise.

'Oh, indeed,' replied William Haverty, with an outward composure which but little agreed with his internal emotions. 'Well, if it is the case, I hope he'll make her a good husband,' he added with an appearance of indifference which rather puzzled the other; who replied:

'If it is the case! Why, I know it is; Murray told me last night that it was all settled, and the marriage is to take place as soon as he can get his house ready and newly furnished for the occasion: and that will cost him a pretty penny, I can tell you. Four thousand pounds won't go far in the furnishing of Glemham Hall; and I shouldn't wonder if it costs him half as much more before it's done,' said Mr. Ingram, confidentially.

'Well, I hope he has the money to spare for it, and will not feel the expense,' replied the captain, with a quiet searching glance.

'Humph!' said Mr. Ingram, with evident confusion. 'I suppose he has the money to

spare, or he would not do it ;' adding, after a moment's hesitating pause : 'Why, of course he has ! What's ten thousand pounds even to the owner of Glemham Hall estates ?'

'Well, I'm glad to hear it,' replied William Haverty, in a dry tone. 'To be sure, ten thousand pounds even, as you say, can't be much to the owner of the Glemham Hall estates.'

'Ah ! Blanche Wyndham, like a wise girl, has taken care to look after the main chance, you see,' remarked Mr. James Ingram, in a mocking tone.

'Humph ! You think so, do you ?' said our hero, with difficulty concealing his secret disgust and annoyance at the impertinent manner of his companion.

'Think so ! Why, what else could she be going to marry him for ?' exclaimed the other ; adding, with affected candour, 'With all respect to my friend Mr. James Murray, otherwise I confess he is not a very likely subject for a handsome young lady to fall in love with, unless she, like your *chère amie*, looked to something else than the mere personal attractions of the man.'

There was something so supremely ridiculous in the self-complacent strut and con-

ceited air of this sallow-complexioned, sunk-eyed, receding-mouth-and-protruding-chinned diminutive piece of egotistical humanity, that, in spite of the impertinence of his tone and remark, William Haverty was even more inclined to laugh than show his displeasure.

'Well, if we were to form the same opinion of every woman who marries a plain-looking not-over-handsome man, I'm afraid there are a good many that might be accused of doing the same,' he replied with a slight satirical twinkle in his clear grey eyes.

'Accuse them, my dear fellow!' cried Mr. Ingram, magnificently. 'Why, I didn't accuse Miss Wyndham! I rather commend her for her discretion.'

'And I have no doubt but she would be much gratified to know of your approbation of her motives in accepting so eligible a man as your friend Mr. Ingram,' replied William Haverty, with suppressed irony.

'But I must not forget it's a sore subject with you; as, of course, it must be, to be jilted in that way by any girl,' rejoined Mr. Ingram in a mock-sympathetic tone, excessively offensive to the feelings of William Haverty, though he endeavoured to conceal it. 'By-the-bye, I hear you and Murray

have already had a bit of a *fracas* upon this subject since you arrived at home, and that you nearly got into a scrape through it,' added Mr. Ingram, familiarly.

'Indeed! Who told you that?' inquired William Haverty, with pretended surprise.

'Why, if I must tell you, it was Murray himself,' replied the other, with feigned reluctance.

'Then you may tell your friend Mr. James Murray from me, that it is not only a lie, but that he knows it's a lie,' returned Captain Haverty, with a sudden flash in his eyes.

'Oh, well, you must excuse me if I decline becoming your messenger in so disagreeable a matter, especially when I know what he would feel in honour bound to demand of you,' replied Mr. Ingram, with a stare.

'Oh, don't feel uneasy upon that point,' said our hero, with a contemptuous smile. 'I know your friend too well to suppose he would either endanger his own life or put you to any trouble on my account.'

'But do you mean to say that what he told me isn't true?' inquired Mr. Ingram.

'Well, as I cannot pretend to know what

he did say, I cannot answer for more than what portion of it may relate to myself. On that point I've no hesitation whatever in again saying that it is an utter falsehood, and that he knows it too!' replied William, emphatically.

'Well, that's very strange!' rejoined Mr. Ingram, with a puzzled look. 'Why, he told me last evening, as he called on his way home after leaving Bilford Hall, that he had just come from a private inquiry there, before General Fielden, which Mr. Wyndham had caused to be made into a terrible attack that you and an Irish servant you have brought home with you made upon him the night before as he left the house of his intended father-in-law. And do you mean to say it is not true?'

'Yes, I do. As I said before, it is an utter, unmitigated lie!' said William, indignantly. 'I attack such a sheep-hearted, white-livered, lying coward as he! I would just as soon think of attacking that child playing in the gutter there as so despicable a fellow as he is.'

'Well, upon my word!' exclaimed Mr. Ingram, with a forced laugh; 'your opinion of him is very flattering, certainly! But I

can't understand this story of his at all about your attacking him.'

'Can't you? Well, I can perhaps assist you. If he had told you that he had been almost frightened out of the little sense he has, by seeing my servant in the dark on the road on Friday evening last; and that he, on learning that my servant had no intention of hurting him, had attacked him with his heavy riding-whip; and that my servant, out of mere self-defence, had snatched the whip from his hand and laid it once or twice across his shoulders with a force that made the big, calf-hearted bully bellow with pain and terror, till I went back and relieved him, and sent him about his business—for, having been a little in advance, I knew nothing whatever of the matter till I heard his cries for help; also, that, in the vain attempt to conceal his own violence and cowardice, he had endeavoured to accuse both me and my servant of a premeditated attack upon him; he had allowed Mr. Wyndham to send for General Fielden to make some inquiry into the matter, who discovered that the whole story had been found to be a trumped-up piece of impudent untruth—I say, had he told you this, he would have only told you what really

took place; but whatever else he has told you is, as I said before, a most unmitigated falsehood,' said William Haverty, in a tone of calm, measured emphasis, which made Mr. Ingram feel rather glad that they were now approaching the gate that led into his own residence.

'Well, that certainly is quite a different version from what he gave me of the affair; and I hardly know which side of the story is the correct one,' said that gentleman, with some hesitation.

'And except that I never allow anything which I know to be false said in my presence without contradicting it, whether it relates to myself or to anyone else, I am utterly indifferent, Mr. Ingram, whether you believe my version or not. Only I beg you will be assured of the truth of the matter before you repeat it to anyone else, in case of any unpleasant consequences to yourself,' said the captain, with constrained composure, as he bade that gentleman good-morning, and walked on after his father and mother, who were a short distance in advance, while Mr. Ingram, with an affected air of polite indifference, returned his salute and went in at his own gate.

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY or two after the events recorded in our last chapter, Captain Haverty, having occasion to go to Westdon, started immediately after breakfast, taking Patrick O'Brien with him to carry home one or two articles he wished to purchase in that town. Having some reluctance to go by the way which led close to the house of the Wyndhams, or rather a kind of fear to trust himself in such near proximity to where his now lost Blanche lived, instead of going along the lane that led toward Bilford Hall, and then taking the footpath over the hill and across the fields, which was the much shorter way, after crossing the little bridge over the stream at the lower end of the village he took the road to the left, which, after ascending the height some distance to the north-west, joined

another thoroughfare that, bearing to the right, led direct down the other side of the hill to the town, which lay facing him, on a gentle acclivity, on the opposite side of the river, with its fine old cathedral rearing up in its centre, and its numerous grey church-towers all lighted up by the bright rays of a genial sun, and backed by wooded heights and hills, still green, in the distance beyond; while, looking to the right, far down the wide, fertile, verdant valley, he could see the broad, clear river, every now and then partially hidden by the leafy clusters of splendid ilexes—equal to anything to be seen in any other part of England—numerous rows of branching elms, varied with a few dark pines and tall poplar trees, winding slowly along the flat plain between the hills, growing broader and broader, till it became almost imperceptibly lost in the opening expanse of the glistening sea beyond, on which a few small vessels, with their white sails, were seen gliding gracefully over the waters before the slight breeze that was blowing up the valley; while far as the eye could reach, to the right and the left, lofty hill-tops, some of them studded with small circular groups of dark trees, were faintly discernible

through the slight blue haze which is almost always one of the features of an English landscape.

The scene was indeed very beautiful: and well might William Haverty pause for a few minutes and gaze with admiration upon it; for, in addition to its own attractions, it was also dear to him from being one in which he had been born and grown up, where he had spent so many happy days, and where still remained all that he loved and that was dear to him upon earth. So much was it associated with his past life and happiest thoughts, that, as he stood there, silently gazing with expanded heart and rapt emotions, he felt as if the whole scene was only a part of himself, something that belonged to and was inseparable ideality of his own mind and nature. And yet, what a change had come over the hopes and prospects of his life and happiness since he last looked upon the scene before him!

Little did he think then, there would ever be a time when he should not, must not, dare not look upon and think of one spot, one person—and that person one on whom he had built the whole fabric of his future earthly felicity—within the wide range of his vision

with the same feelings of love and devotion he then did! and that the bright object of all his happy dreams would one day become to him a source of disappointment, grief and hopeless wretchedness.

As if this last thought had been a spur applied to his heart, he broke from his contemplation and hastily began to descend the hill before him, followed a few yards behind him by Patrick O'Brien, who, during the time of his master's abstraction, had been busy cutting a stout elm-shoot walking-stick out of the hedge a few paces off; with which he now came on, polishing it with his pocket-knife as he went along.

As they descended the hill, the high banks and bramble-hedges, and the fruit and market-gardens with their high mud-walls, and a few straggling, crumbling old white-washed clay cottages with bulging walls and rotten-thatch roofs, on each side of the road, soon cut off the whole prospect from their view, except what lay directly before them.

Near the bottom of the hill, with a large fruit-garden behind and on each side of it, a few paces back from the road; with a clay-and-stone wall in front, and the space between filled with large coarse shrubs, and against

the walls and round the door and windows of which were some rude, loose, tangled rose-trees and jasmines; with a wide opening in the wall, and a broken-down wooden gate, and three or four rough stone steps leading up to a half-paved, dirty-looking, narrow path across the space already named toward the front door; with a kind of half-castellated front, black-looking bent chimneys and rough slated roof, the whole crumbling and dilapidated in appearance from age and neglect, and stained and discoloured by the rain from the moss-furred roof down the once white-washed walls, —stood an old, irregularly built, two-storied house, which at one time had evidently been the residence of a much more respectable family than what now lived in it.

One portion of this was inhabited by the man Bilson and his wife, with their daughter, a girl of about twelve or thirteen years of age, as well as by a man and his family who assisted Bilson in working the gardens; while a considerable portion of it was either unused altogether, or only for keeping fruit during the season, or for lumber.

This house had long had a very doubtful repute in the neighbourhood; Bilson himself having been strongly suspected of being con-

cerned in several robberies that had been committed close by, and his wife being well known to receive rather more visits from two or three gentlemen—one of whom was Mr. James Murray and another Mr. James Ingram—than was altogether consistent or proper.

As Captain Haverty, who was a few paces in advance of his servant, was approaching the small open gate leading up to the house, he observed a somewhat large, hard-haired, vicious terrier dog sitting upon the top step, which snarled a little; but as it did not attempt to attack him, he passed on without taking any further notice of it, except perhaps holding the stout cane in his hand rather tighter, to be ready in case of having occasion to lay it across the back of the spiteful-looking animal. Not so, however, Patrick O'Brien. The moment he saw the dog, which bristled up fiercely, showing its teeth as he drew near where it was, he knew that it meant mischief, and gleefully prepared for its attack; for, like a true Irishman, the prospect of a fight of any kind, whether with man or beast, was to him both agreeable and attractive. Besides, the instant he saw the dog and heard its snarling growl, he felt sure

it was the same he had seen on the footpath with the two men, on the evening of their arrival.

'Och,' said he to himself, taking a tight hold of the stick he had cut out of the hedge, 'an' that's you, my friend: an' by the powers, you saim to know me agin! Never mind, I'm prepared for ye.'

By this time he had arrived opposite the steps where the dog sat, crouched down and ready for a spring; and just as Patrick was passing, it made a sudden bound behind him, and caught hold of the leg of his trousers, fortunately missing its aim in getting hold of himself. In an instant, however, it let go its hold and was about to retreat up the steps; but before it could do so, Patrick's stout elm-stick had come down upon its head, and laid it sprawling and yelling upon the road.

'Hollo, Patrick! what's the matter?' said his master, turning hastily round on hearing this, whilst at the same moment a fierce dirty-looking fellow, in corduroy trousers, large heavy boots, velveteen waistcoat without the coat, and his shirt-sleeves hanging loose at the wrists, whom they instantly recognised as Mr. James Murray's witness, Bilson, suddenly made his appearance from

among the large shrubs, and, with an oath, demanded what they meant by attacking his dog.

'Sure now, an' the dog attacked me first,' said Patrick, preparing to repeat the application the moment it got up, but was stopped by his master.

'You're a —— Irish liar!' replied Bilson, with a threatening look and fierce oath.

'He is no such thing. Look at that rent in his trousers, there,' said Captain Haverty, pointing to a large tear just below the knee.

'And how do I know the dog made that?' returned the fellow, insolently.

'I tell you so,' replied the captain, quietly.

'But I ain't such a —— fool as to believe either you or your —— Irishman,' said the fellow, insultingly.

'Sure now, an' I don't care whether ye believe it or not,' remarked Patrick coolly, while at the same moment the dog got up and crouched behind its master, glaring fiercely in Patrick's face. 'Ah!' continued he, addressing the dog, 'I'll taich ye not to attack people who 'aven't spoken to ye, agin.'

'I'll teach ye not to attack my dog again, ye Irish ——, if ye don't go about your busi-

ness,' replied the ruffian, who seemed unable to speak without using an oath.

'Och, now, an' it's jist mysilf that would like to ha' a little o' that same taichin' o' yours,' returned Patrick, with a provoking grin; 'I suppose ye intended doin' a little o' that same, the other night, when my masther and I met ye an' yer comrade, along with that same dog o' yours, in the dark lane behind there; but found it was rather inconvanient to do so just then.'

'Patrick, follow me,' said the captain, turning to resume his way. 'And you,' he continued, addressing the man in a calm, stern voice, 'instead of allowing a dangerous cur like that to run about and attack people in passing, and insulting them for defending themselves from its teeth, you had much better keep it in doors, and also a more civil tongue in your own head, if that be possible, in case both you and it do not get off quite so well another time.'

As he said this, just as he was turning to walk on, Captain Haverty happened to cast his eye towards the door of the house, and to his surprise saw a stout grey cob horse standing there, which he thought not only bore a strong resemblance to one Mr. James

Murray used to ride, three or four years ago, but to the one he had seen him on a night or two before. In a moment Bilson saw this, and, evidently vexed that he should have observed it, muttering some coarse expressions between his teeth, turned quickly round and slunk away inside the stone-and-clay wall, among the shrubs towards the end of the house. Nor did the captain alone notice the horse. Patrick had done the same, and also recognised it.

'Och,' said he, half to himself, as he went on behind his master, on the narrow footpath by the side of the road, 'bedad! if there isn't another acquaintance of mine there! By the powers, my friends meet me in all directions now!'

'What do you say, Patrick?' inquired his master, looking round as he heard this.

'Sure an', yer honor, I was ounly congratulating myself, as yer honour's friends did you when ye came home, on the number of my friends sin' I came into this same pleasant counthry,' replied Patrick, ironically. 'Bedad! an Irishman might live here all the days o' his life, an' niver know but he was in dear ould Ireland—everything is so like it, even to the clay-walls an' mud cot-

tages—an' have a shindy whenever he liked into the bargain, too.'

'So you recognised that fellow again, then, I perceived,' remarked the captain.

'Ay, that I did, yer honor; an' his farocious dog, too, as well as that same grey horse standin' at his door among thim bushes there,' said Patrick.

'Indeed! Do you think you have seen that horse before, then?' inquired his master, with feigned ignorance.

'Sure, an' yer honor doesn't mane to ask that?' he returned, with a sceptical look at his master.

'Of course I do. Whose horse do you think it is?'

'Well, if that isn't the same horse that the gintleman was on that charged upon me in the lane the night we marched from the railway up to our quarters, at his honor yer father's house, I'm not the son of my father and mother, that's all,' said O'Brien, confidently.

'Oh! then you think it is Mr. James Murray's horse, do you?'

'Sure an' I do, yer honor.'

'Well, I thought so too, Patrick; only it seems strange that Mr. Murray's horse should

be standing there,' returned William Haverty, as if unsuspicious of any reason for it.

'Mr. Murray and that ill-lookin' thaif saim to be more intimate than gintlemen gine-rally are with the likes o' him,' remarked Patrick; 'or maybe, yer honor, he may ha' gone in to see some friend who lives there,' he added, with a grin of intelligence which showed he was not altogether ignorant of the currently reported visits of that gentleman to the house.

'Well, perhaps he has, Patrick,' replied Captain Haverty, with a grave, half-con-temptuous sad smile at the depraved taste of the future husband of Blanche Wyndham.

O'Brien seemed to guess the thoughts of his master, for he immediately said:

'Sure now, yer honor, isn't that a purty gintleman to be goin' to marry a jewel o' a young lady!'

'Humph!' said William Haverty, with a half-surprised look at his servant. 'Yes; it seems a great pity that the future happiness of an amiable young lady should be sacrificed to such a man as that.'

'Well, now, yer honor, that's jist what I've been thinkin', and sure an' he ought to be previnted,' said Patrick, cautiously watching

the expression of his master's countenance; for he well knew that although he allowed him considerable liberty of speech at times, he would not permit anything like familiarity.

'Why, Patrick, if her parents approve of the match, I don't know that anyone else has any right or power to prevent it.'

'Och! botheration to the right an' the power, when the darlint young lady herself is goin' to be as good as killt and murthered without her own consent to such an unmannerly Rooshan as that same Mr. Murray. Sure now, if I had been a gintleman like yer honor, and had known that same young lady before,' said Patrick, getting somewhat embarrassed, 'I shouldn't ha' throubled myself about the right or the power yer honor spakes o', at all, at all.'

'Indeed! What, then, would you have done?' inquired his master, half amused.

'Why, sure now, an' I should ha' circumvinted the murtherin' villain,' said Patrick, energetically.

'Circumvinted him! What do you mean by that, Patrick?' inquired his master, with a half-suppressed smile.

'Sure an' yer honor doesn't want the likes o' me to be spakin' like a dictionar', explainin'

the mainin' o' big words,' replied Patrick, half confusedly, who seemed to be afraid of being too explicit in his advice to his master, in case of giving offence. 'There's no use in throublin' about that, at all, at all. Laive that to him, says I; he'll be better at it than me, as I'm no scholar, as your honor knows.'

Wondering in his own mind if Patrick really knew the meaning of his own words, Captain Haverty again resumed his position a few yards in advance of him, while the latter muttered to himself, as he fell behind:

'Sure an' it's mysilf, now, that'll do that same circumvintin' without throublin mysilf about the mainin' at all, at all.'

CHAPTER XVI.

If William Haverty had been disposed to entertain any doubt as to the horse he had seen at Bilson's door being Mr. James Murray's, or of that gentleman himself being in the house, it was speedily dispelled by that worthy personage himself trotting heavily past him upon the same stout grey horse, as he was crossing the bridge into the town.

Without making any remark, Captain Haverty looked round and exchanged a glance of intelligence with his servant a few yards behind him, who had also perceived this double assurance of what before he felt certain about.

Captain Haverty's first call in the town was at the bank of Messrs. Ingram and Day, to draw some money which he had directed his agent in London to remit to him there,

instead of his bringing it with him. There were several people in the bank when he entered, and a couple of cashiers behind the counter attending upon them, who seemed in no particular hurry to get rid of their customers. Captain Haverty having left Patrick outside the door, in the passage, therefore waited several minutes before he even seemed to be noticed by anyone belonging to the establishment.

Feeling somewhat tired, he sat down upon a kind of bench or form against the wall facing the counter, at the end of which was a door, partially open, leading into the private room, or office, of one of the partners. Just as he sat down he heard the voices of two persons inside, and was about to rise again, having no wish to overhear what they might be talking about, when in the voice of one he recognised the gruff, though suppressed, tones of Mr. James Murray, which fell upon his ears like a spell, and with an utterly unaccountable influence chained him to his seat. The other voice was evidently that of the elder Mr. Ingram.

'Well, Mr. Murray,' said the latter, slowly, as if in reply to something Murray had said, 'you know we have already advanced you a

large amount on the only disposable portion of your estate, the interest of which, you are aware, has not been paid for the last year and a half either; and this is a large sum you now want, at so short a notice, too.'

'Why you know, Mr. Ingram,' urged the other, in somewhat of an entreating tone, 'you know that the deeds and securities I have placed in your hands must be worth more, by far, than all you have advanced upon them; and what I now ask——'

'Humph! I don't know that,' returned the banker, in a quiet tone. 'You know—which, of course, I don't expect will be required, but I merely now look at it in a business point of view; but in case anything occurred by which it was necessary to act upon these bonds, or realise these securities, you know, as well as I do, that there would be considerable legal expenses incurred, which would have to be paid out of the estate also. But, of course, I only mention this to remind you of what you have already been told, although, as I have just said, I do not look upon it as an eventuality ever likely to occur.'

From the peculiar tone in which this was said, William Haverty could not help feeling that it was not only likely to occur, but that

Mr. Ingram would not hesitate to use the utmost rigour of the law in putting his claims in force.

It was a few seconds before Mr. Murray made any reply. Probably he found it necessary to pause and think what to urge next, or possibly to smother the indignation he knew it would be dangerous for him to exhibit under present circumstances.

'But, surely, those securities are worth two thousand pounds more than you have yet advanced upon them?' at length said Mr. Murray, in a tone which betrayed some anxiety about his future prospects; 'and, as for the interest you mention, after this affair is over I shall be able to pay up all that, as well as repay what I want now.'

'Well, of course, if I were to advance anything more now, it would be only upon that express condition,' remarked Mr. Ingram, 'and with the full understanding and agreement that it must be repaid then. But two thousand pounds is a large sum all at once, especially as you are not quite sure of the amount of cash Wyndham means to give down with his daughter. As I told you, he said to me the other day that he would want to draw five thousand pounds of his money

in our hands very shortly, but I cannot say that he means to give the whole of that to his daughter as a marriage gift.'

'Why, what else could he want with it at such a time?' urged Mr. Murray.

'I don't know, certainly,' replied the banker; who added, after a pause, with something like hesitation or confusion in his voice, 'and then, you see, having to prepare for that, compels us to advance the money to both parties.'

'Yes; but his is only money in your hands,' said Mr. Murray.

'Well, so it is; but then, you know, our money may be out too, as a large sum is with you, and we cannot always realise without either making sacrifices that we don't wish to do, or pressing upon others, which we should likewise be unwilling to do,' replied Mr. Ingram, in a tone which, while it assumed to be of the most assuring and friendly kind, plainly implied quite the contrary to what the speaker professed, and at the same time betrayed some slight uneasiness respecting his own means of meeting these demands.

'Why, surely,' said Mr. Murray, with a forced laugh, 'such an amount as that cannot be any inconvenience to you, who have so

much money always in your hands. Besides, you will have most of it back again within a few days after you pay it.'

'Ay: it's very well for you, Mr. Murray, to talk about our having such large sums of money in our hands, which I grant we have,' returned Mr. Ingram; 'but we have large liabilities, too. We never know for how much we may be called upon at any time. Suppose that a dozen of our customers became alarmed—I—I mean,' said he, evidently afraid he had said more than was prudent; 'I mean, suppose a dozen of our customers, who are large depositors in our bank, should take it into their heads to withdraw their money all at once, it might be rather inconvenient for us to—to meet their claims without alarming or—I mean, without more of our customers hearing of it, and becoming uneasy also, which might result in a run being made upon us, and then you may guess how unpleasant it would be for us to be obliged to force the realisation of the securities we have in our hands.'

'Yes; but I shouldn't think there is any likelihood or risk of such an occurrence as that,' rejoined Mr. Murray, in a voice of evident uneasiness.

'Well, I hope not; only in our critical position—I mean—' said Mr. Ingram, suddenly checking himself, 'in our extensive business, and with our immense liabilities and connections, it is necessary that we should act with great prudence and caution, you know. Besides, our expenses are very great, as you may be well aware. We have our own large establishments to maintain, appearances to keep up, and many claims upon us of which you, of course, know nothing, all of which must be supported out of the funds—I mean, of course, the profits of the bank,' said Mr. Ingram, again correcting himself.

'Well, you can't say that I spend much in keeping up appearances, at all events,' replied Mr. Murray, with another forced laugh, and, as our hero fancied, from his voice, with something like a tinge of irony in his tone. 'You know I have not kept a carriage of any kind for many years; I have only one horse, anything but a showy one; I give no parties now, and go nowhere likely to entail any expense.'

'Humph! Yes; but if I must speak my mind now, Mr. Murray, on a subject which, except as an old friend, and an old man perhaps I should not be justified in doing, I

sometimes fancy you spend quite as much, or more, I should rather say, upon yourself than one of your apparent quiet habits, and—and limited means, for, you know, they are limited now, ought to do,' returned Mr. Ingram.

'Well, I don't think anyone has any right to call me to account as to the way I choose to spend my money,' rejoined Mr. Murray, evidently beginning to lose patience. 'If you will not advance me the money, then the whole affair must drop. Without having money enough to furnish my house, and to keep up appearances, as you call it, till the wedding takes place, I must relinquish all further hopes of carrying it out, as well as of paying off any of this money that you want from me. You know that it was yourself that first put me upon the chase, and advised me to continue it, promising to assist me if there was any prospect of success; and now that everything is so near being completed, I must say it will be very hard on your part to fail in your promise.'

Mr. Ingram knew as well as Murray that the success of the latter depended in a great measure on the support he received from himself, and that his only chance of recovering

without having recourse to measures which it did not suit his purpose at that time to employ, a large sum due by that gentleman as interest upon money lent him by the bank, and which was very much required to meet their demands, was to assist him to carry out his scheme of marrying Blanche Wyndham. But he was resolved to institute such measures as would insure its immediate payment the moment the marriage took place.

'Well,' said Mr. Ingram after a short pause, 'it shan't be said that we forsook you at last, if we should even have to dispose of other securities to assist you, for just at present we have a smaller reserve fund for extraordinary claims than we have had for some time. But do you still feel confident of attaining your object in marrying the young lady? I have heard she hasn't much fancy for the match herself.'

'Well, I don't trouble myself much about her foolish fancies,' replied Mr. Murray, in a slightly mortified tone. 'Her father and mother have both agreed to it long ago, and she has done so now, and it only wants the day to be named, which will be as soon as I've got my house ready, and then the affair will be all over.'

'But they say she used to have a fancy for this young Captain Haverty, who, I hear has just come home from the Russian war. Mayn't he interfere with your plans, don't you think?'

'Not if I am supported now. You have heard of that affair between him and me the other night, and I find that it has made her father all the more anxious and resolved to have the thing concluded as soon as possible.'

'Well, I am glad of that; I was fearful of the contrary. It was a bad affair. You did not come out of it so well as you ought to have done.'

'Indeed!' said Mr. Murray, in a tone of half-offended mortification. 'In what way?'

'Well, I don't wish to say it offensively, but I think you have not done yourself any good in the estimation of one or two people whose good opinion I should be sorry that either you or I should lose. The Havertys, of course, have anything but a favourable impression of you, after that. Well, perhaps you say they are not of much consequence. Neither are they, individually, though the colonel, as you are aware, is a highly respectable and greatly respected man, and as he has always a good sum in our hands, too, we

should be sorry to offend him. But more so on account of General Fielden, who, I know, has great regard for him, and would feel much offended at any insult or disrespect being shown to the colonel, for I could see, from his manner when he was here yesterday, drawing some money, when I asked him about this affair between you and the captain, he was anything but pleased with your conduct in the matter ; and as he knows that you and I are upon very intimate terms, any ill-feeling arising between you and him might conduce to a coldness on his part towards me, which would be rather a serious matter to us, as he has always a very large amount in our hands, which it would be very awkward indeed if he took it into his head to withdraw —that is to say suddenly,' said Mr. Ingram, who felt more uneasy upon the subject than he wished Mr. Murray to see or suspect.

'Well, for your sake, I should be very sorry to cause any unpleasantness, but I couldn't do otherwise than I did,' said Mr. Murray, stammering, no doubt trying to make the other believe that Captain Haverty had been the aggressor.

'Humph! I am rather inclined to think otherwise. When you knew you had so bad

a case, I think you ought not to have done anything at all.'

'Why, but my personal safety—I mean honour—demanded that some inquiry should have been made,' returned Mr. Murray, somewhat pompously.

'Humph! I think now, that it would have been much better in that respect also, if the matter had never been heard of,' remarked the banker, drily, 'and then that fellow, Bilson, that you brought forward as a witness, was anything but wise on your part. You know as well as I do the kind of character he bears in the neighbourhood, as well as what people say about your horse being seen rather frequently at his door, and the probable object of your visits to his house; which, I think, is also a very imprudent thing on your part, especially at present.'

'Well, I don't think people have any business either to interfere or trouble themselves about me in the matter,' replied Mr. Murray, testily, 'and I wish that Bilson had broken the neck of that young puppy, Haverty, and his d—— Irish servant too, when he met them in the narrow lane the same evening I came across them. It would have not only relieved me of any anxiety on his account

respecting Blanche Wyndham, but would have gone far to remove her objection to—to——'

'To marry you,' said Mr. Ingram, taking up the word as the other paused with some embarrassment in his voice. 'Oh, then you have still some uncertainty on that point.'

'No, I've no uncertainty at all, except that I should have liked it better if the fellow hadn't come back and revived some silly fancies in her mind, at the very time that her father had given his consent to our marriage. But as for any uncertainty, I have none whatever. Both her father and mother have pledged themselves to the affair, and will not allow—in fact, they cannot allow—any weak notions or whims of hers to break off the match now,' said Mr. Murray, in an assuring tone.

'And they have agreed that the marriage shall take place as soon as you can get your house ready for the reception of your bride?'

'Yes; and I am anxious, too, to have all my furnishing done as soon as I can, that it may be got over, and then there will be no occasion to be uneasy upon the subject.'

'Well, the sooner it is over the better for all parties, I think,' said Mr. Ingram.

'But two thousand pounds is a large sum for you to want to lay out in furniture.'

'Why, you know what a wretchedly large place I have, and that my old furniture is all quite worn out, so that everything will have to be new; and for my own character's sake to keep—up appearances, as you say—which I must do a little when I am married—for my standing in the county I must make some show, if it were only to conceal my real position,' said Mr. Murray, who knew too well that Mr. Ingram was quite aware of the true state of his affairs to attempt any concealment in this respect. 'Besides,' he added, 'my expenses will necessarily be larger then than at present, especially at first, and for the sake of my own character I must keep a little company, as well as have a carriage for my wife.'

'Well, I suppose we must see to let you have the money; only, as I've said, you must clearly understand that it shall be paid back to us the very day the wedding takes place, when you have received the money promised to you by Mr. Wyndham,' said Mr. Ingram distinctly.

'Yes, I am aware of that,' replied Mr. Murray, in a not over well-pleased tone.

'Very well; if you leave these papers, as soon as we have looked them over, and had your signature to the bond, which we shall instruct our solicitor to draw up, the money shall be placed to your credit, to be drawn by you as you may require it.'

'I suppose, then, in a day or two the bond will be ready?'

'Yes; if you call the day after to-morrow, when you are in the town at the court, it shall be ready for your signature, and then you may begin to draw the money to pay for anything you require. Take my advice: get the affair over as soon as you possibly can; for one never knows what accidents may happen to interfere with such things while they are uncompleted. If you can manage to have it over in one month instead of two, or in two months instead of three, by all means do so.'

'Well, now that there is no impediment on this point, I shall hasten it forward as much as possible; and if I can manage to have everything ready in a month, or even in six weeks, I shall urge upon her father to use his authority to induce her to have the ceremony over without delay.'

So deeply had William Haverty been ab-

sorbed in this conversation, that, although sitting playing with his cane upon the toe of his boot, and apparently thinking of nothing in particular, he had almost entirely forgotten everything else, and had allowed several other people to come into the bank and go out again without going forward to take his turn at the counter. The cashiers, too, had once or twice glanced at him; but not catching his eye, had gone on attending to the other people. At length he was left alone in the bank, and one of the gentlemen behind the counter, seeing him still sitting without appearing to notice anything, politely said:

'Is there anything that we can do for you, sir?'

'Oh, I—I beg your pardon,' William Haverty replied, springing up slightly confused. 'I—I did not notice that you were disengaged,' he added, presenting the draft which his agent in London had given him to receive the money that had been remitted for him.

'Oh, Captain Haverty, I presume?' said the clerk, as he looked at the draft.

'Yes, I am Captain Haverty,' he replied.

'Do you wish to draw the whole amount now, sir, or only a part, and have the rest

as you require it?' inquired the cashier, politely.

'Thank you, I'll take it all now,' replied the captain, who had heard enough to convince him that the money was at least quite as safe in his own possession as in that of Messrs. Ingram and Day, 'and I should prefer it in Bank of England notes, if you have them, except about ten pounds in gold,' he added.

'Very well, sir,' replied the cashier, glancing at his fellow-clerk, as he began to make preparation for paying the money, while at the same moment Mr. Ingram and Mr. James Murray came out of the private office: the latter, most probably without observing Captain Haverty, whose back was toward him, going out; and the former, after approaching near enough to see who it was, gave a slight start, and exclaimed with feigned pleasure, as he held out his hand and offered a couple of fingers to our hero, who, with ill-concealed contempt for the deceitful, pompous old fop, gave a formal shake to the portion of the hand proffered him:

'What! Captain Haverty? I am indeed glad to see you safe home again. I heard of your return a few days ago, and would have

done myself the pleasure of driving out to congratulate you and your esteemed father before this, but have been unable to accomplish it.'

Now, as William Haverty had no knowledge of Mr. Ingram ever having called upon his father before, he was scarcely so much surprised that he had not done so since he came home, as that he should have contemplated doing so at all.

'My father would, no doubt, have felt honoured by your call, Mr. Ingram,' replied the captain, somewhat stiffly, thinking of what he had just overheard, and feeling no small contempt for the shallow old pretender.

'We have received the advice of the remittance from Messrs. Cocks and Co. I suppose you have called to see if it has come all right?' said the banker, in an assumed friendly tone, though not without observing there was something like reserve and formality in the manner of our hero.

'Yes; and I have just handed this gentleman here the draft for the money,' he replied.

'Oh, you don't want it to remain at your credit, then?' said Mr. Ingram, with a surprised look; adding, with a forced smile of advice, 'why, you had better let it be in

our hands, and draw it as you require it. There are one or two suspicious fellows who live out towards Bilford, as I understand you found out on your way home the evening of your arrival: and if they knew you had so large a sum as this upon you, or in the house, I should not like to guarantee its safety, or your own either.'

'Oh, upon that score I am quite easy,' replied Captain Haverty, with a smile. 'Those are not the sort of gentlemen I am at all uneasy about, or afraid of.'

'Well, just as you please, captain,' rejoined Mr. Ingram, with some degree of secret chagrin in his look. 'Let Mr. Haverty have the money,' he said, addressing the cashier who had received the draft.

'Yes, sir,' replied the clerk, beginning to count the notes.

'Good-morning, sir,' said Mr. Ingram, as he sidled off, and gave a stiff bow as he reentered the private office with somewhat of a slightly disconcerted look.

'Good-morning,' replied the captain, with a courteous though formal bend of his head.

Having received the money, which was upwards of six hundred pounds, Captain Haverty left the bank, and found Patrick

waiting for him upon the very same spot he had left him when he entered, who expressed no small surprise at having seen Mr. James Murray come out a few minutes before, at which the gallant Irishman had been strongly tempted to 'circumvint' him, but had been withheld by considerations of policy and respect for the presence of his master, rather than from any thought of danger or disagreeable consequences to himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

After making two or three more calls, and having purchased one or two articles, and consigned them to the custody of his servant, Patrick O'Brien, Captain Haverty left the town and took his way toward Bilford Hall, pondering much and deeply upon what he had so singularly overheard at Messrs. Ingram and Day's bank. He had no intention of drawing the whole of the money when he entered that establishment; but from the conversation he had accidentally heard between Mr. Ingram and Mr. James Murray, and the evident uneasiness of the former lest his credit should be exposed to any scrutiny, his almost confessed difficulty in raising even the sum required by the latter for furnishing his house, preparatory to his marriage and the expenses therefrom arising, fully con-

vinced him that the position of the bank was not by any means so secure or prosperous as people generally supposed, and which it was now the aim of the partners to conceal by false appearances of wealth, in ostentatious display, and keeping up large establishments of carriages, horses, and a retinue of servants, and a most expensive style of living in every other respect.

Few people in the county gave such magnificent dinners and grand entertainments, or could make such a splendid display of plate, as Mr. Ingram of Ingram Park, or Mr. Day of Sunnydown House; and half the nobility in the county used to go to their parties. In fact, the wives of both these gentlemen being, like their husbands, of rather obscure and plebeian origin themselves, had much more of the cringing, clinging, and hankering after titled society than was altogether consistent with either their own assumed and everyday increasing pretension to superlative gentility, or their rude, haughty bearing towards those who, in most cases far better bred than themselves, happened to have less appearance of wealth than they had.

Instead of returning home the same way he came, after crossing the lodge, he sent

on his servant to find his way home by himself, William Haverty turned sharply to the left, down a short street which led to an open road, running for some distance nearly parallel with the river, after which it became divided in two, one portion diverging to the right and leading close past the residence of General Fielden, a little beyond which a narrow lane branched off toward Bilford, and after running along the high ground, bent down into the valley, passing a short distance behind Bilford Hall, near which it joined another road leading to the village.

Why he should have taken this road would be, perhaps, rather difficult to say. Probably he had no motive at all, unless it was that by lengthening his walk a little he might have the more time to think of the conversation he had heard between Mr. Ingram and James Murray in the bank, and to muse upon the strange accident by which he had been acquainted with so much, not only of the affairs of the latter gentleman, but of the bankers themselves. For little as he heard upon this last subject, it was enough to excite no small amount of doubt and suspicion in his mind as to the security and solvency of their position; and acting upon this in-

ward conviction, he had not only at once drawn out the whole of his remittance from London, but resolved also to acquaint his father with what he had heard, that he too might withdraw his account from their bank —for he knew his father had generally a tolerably large amount there—before any sudden or unforeseen occurrence brought down upon its proprietors the ruin that he suspected was impending.

His great respect and regard, too, for General Fielden strongly inclined him to take some means of acquainting that gentleman also with his fears as to the safety of the bank, in which he had learned the general had no small amount of money. But this he found to be a very delicate subject to say anything about, in case, after all, he might have mistaken the meaning of the few rather ambiguous words he had heard drop from Mr. Ingram, especially as he knew that General Fielden was upon the most intimate and friendly terms with both Mr. Ingram and Mr. Day, who always treated the open-hearted, unsuspicious old soldier with the greatest apparent respect and friendly consideration. This, however our hero now strongly suspected was rather from interested motives than from

real regard and genuine good feeling. He had heard enough to convince him of this, and the remarks respecting his father, too, fully assured him that the only rule of estimation in which people were held by these men was just in proportion as they, either in their own persons or with respect to their influence upon others, were likely to be useful to them, or subservient to the ends they had in view in their business operations and connections.

William Haverty, however, resolved that General Fielden should, at least, have a hint as to his suspicions of the stability of the bank: and probably this may, though scarcely conscious of it himself, have had something to do with his taking the way home that he did. Some vague idea that he might possibly encounter the general may have just given a certain kind of indefinite inclination to his mind, which had made his feet, almost of themselves, as it were, turn in the direction of the road that led past his house.

Just as William Haverty was approaching the iron gates that opened into the circular carriage sweep, leading to the front of General Fielden's residence, a large, handsome open chariot, drawn by a pair of fine horses, with a

coachman and footman seated upon a huge box-seat in front, dashed rapidly past him and entered the gate, which the footman jumped down from his perch and flung open with an air that would have done credit to the Queen's livery itself.

The chariot contained two persons, one seated, or rather leaning back against the soft white satin lined back of the carriage, with the most studied air of haughty self-complacency and indifference of all the world, which she appeared to think scarcely worth turning one glance of her affectedly half-closed eyes upon, and the other opposite her, reclining towards one corner of the carriage, looking upon surrounding objects, or upon the few persons they passed on the road, with an expression of supercilious contempt and abstracted indifference upon his rather shrunken features, receding mouth and protruding-chin, only equalled by that of his faded, much made-up companion.

The two persons were Mr. Ingram and his wife.

William Haverty looked up as the chariot rolled swiftly past him, and, when he saw who it was, was about to move his hat to its occupants, as he had some slight acquaintance

with Mrs. Ingram as well as her husband, having been in the habit of meeting them both in the society of the neighbourhood ever since he had attained sufficient age and standing to entitle him to go into it; but, much to his surprise, neither the lady nor the gentleman took the slightest notice of him, but let their eyes travel over him in passing with a much-affected calm, pompous indifference and complete absence of recognition, as if they had never seen him before, or saw him only as they saw the bramble hedges and pollard-trees lining the road along which they were driving.

The captain thought that Mrs. Ingram might possibly not have recognised him after his absence of between two or three years, though that was by no means likely; but her husband must have both seen and known him again; and therefore his passing him as he did showed that the non-recognition was intentional. Although he knew their character too well to be greatly surprised at this pompous rudeness, he was, nevertheless, not a little annoyed at such evident want of courtesy.

Shortly after passing the grounds belonging to General Fielden, Captain Haverty turned

to the right, into the narrow lane, already mentioned, which joined this end of the Bilston turnpike-road, about half a mile nearer to the village than where the two main-roads met, and advanced along it, in not the best of humour with the two persons who had just gone to call upon the general.

Our hero had not, however, gone far when he thought he heard a carriage behind him, and, on looking round, beheld the carriage of Mr. and Mrs. Ingram rapidly approaching. The lane, which was between two high, thick bramble hedges, was just of sufficient width to allow a carriage to pass along—though it was hardly intended for it—and in doing which it took up the whole of the space between the two hedges, so that it was impossible to pass any person without his either creeping down under the hedge on one side, climbing up the rough, steep prickly bank on the other, or till a break in the fence, or a side gate, allowed him to step aside to make room for it. This last our hero resolved should be the case.

Without, therefore, paying the slightest attention to the shouts of the coachman, or the closeness of the horses behind him, he never once looked round, but walked leisurely on

till he came to a small gap in one of the hedges, where stepping upon the slightly elevated open space, he stood with his back to the carriage till it had gone past and turned a corner in the lane, a short distance further on, and was out of sight, as if perfectly unconscious of both it and those who were in it.

During the latter part of his walk, William Haverty had been gradually ascending higher ground, and he now stood upon the brow of one of the hills that surrounded his native valley, the prospect from which was alike varied, extensive and beautiful, although now stripped of much of the freshness and beauty of its summer attire. Still, the view was both pleasing and interesting.

At the bottom of the sloping height on which our hero stood lay the broad green valley and quiet village of Bilford, with its small clear stream shining in the bright sun as it glided slowly along, winding through the still verdant meadows, which were filled with cattle and sheep; the old grey church-tower just discernible above the cluster of large dark old yew-trees which surrounded the ivy-covered church, and the few white-walled, thatched-roof, half-villa residences of

its genteel inhabitants, here and there seen in its outskirts, all lighted up, and reposing in the most peaceful security and happiness, as if utterly unconscious of the surrounding world, and perfectly free from all the cares, struggles, passions and commotions which afflict and agitate the rest of mankind. And yet, how little of that apparent happiness and content was real! There was just the same proportion of falsehood, dishonesty, uncharitableness, envious emulation, secret vice, jealous rivalry, and all the other evil passions and feelings of human nature, as well as its virtues, to be found there, as are to be found anywhere else. It is a great mistake to ascribe all the vices and sins of the world to its cities and large towns, and all the virtues of innocence to rural inhabitants. We believe there is not a village or hamlet in the kingdom but has its fair proportion of the former as well as the latter.

And so, at least, thought William Haverty, as he stood there contemplating the scene around him, probably a little irritated and disappointed by the events and circumstances of the last few days; and perhaps, too, for the last few hours.

A little to the right, by the edge of the valley beneath him, he could see the house of the Wyndhams, and at that moment he observed the carriage containing Mr. and Mrs. Ingram driving up the little sweep toward their door, where we will, for a few minutes, follow them.

Having been shown into the drawing-room, where they were speedily joined by Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham, who both felt much gratified with the visit of such high and mighty people, especially Mrs. Wyndham, who had seldom before even been honoured with a bow from Mrs. Ingram, and had certainly, till then, never had the honour of shaking hands with her—if it could be called shaking hands to feel a couple of cold motionless fingers touch her own and then suddenly drawn back again.

Nor was the greeting between the two gentlemen a whit less formal, Mr. Ingram merely placing the first two fingers of his right hand in those of Mr. Wyndham, who secretly felt scarcely satisfied with this rather uncordial mode of performing what to him was always a very hearty ceremony.

'I am really ashamed, Mrs. Wyndham,' said Mrs. Ingram, with a cold kind of con-

banker as that gentleman intended he should be.

'But this intended marriage of your daughter with my highly esteemed and valued old friend Mr. James Murray,' continued Mr. Ingram, oratorically, 'is so agreeable to my feelings of regard for both you and him, that I found I could not any longer refrain from paying you a visit to congratulate you upon the approach of so fortunate and honourable an alliance and so auspicious an event.'

'I am much obliged for both your good wishes and the honour you have done us in calling,' replied Mr. Wyndham, courteously but quietly.

'Oh, don't say honour, Mr. Wyndham,' exclaimed the other, with an air that evidently conveyed the idea that he thought so himself: 'it is a pleasure—I assure you I feel it so. But, as I said, I could not refrain from calling now to congratulate you upon so highly desirable an alliance as that which I understand is so soon to take place between Miss Wyndham and my old friend Mr. James Murray, whose family and position in the county certainly make such an alliance a very desirable one,' said he, repeating his

words for want of something else with which to round off the sentence.

'Yes, I know his family is a very old and respectable one in the county, as well as his own position,' replied Mr. Wyndham, somewhat confused in his ideas; for he, somehow or other, had begun to entertain some secret misgivings respecting both the character and real position of his future son-in-law, which gave him considerable uneasiness, though he was unwilling to show it to either Mr. Ingram or anyone else, little suspecting that that gentleman knew far more upon that subject than himself, and that this very visit was planned for the express purpose, and intended to deceive him still more upon that very point, both as respected Mr. Murray's position and Mr. Ingram's own. And for a similar reason had he, Mr. Ingram, called upon General Fielden on his way: but not finding that gentleman at home, had come directly on to Mr. Wyndham's.

'Shall we not have the pleasure of seeing Miss Wyndham to congratulate her also?' asked Mrs. Ingram, in an affected tone of feigned interest.

'I'm afraid she will not be able to come downstairs and see you,' replied Mrs. Wynd-

ham: 'she is very unwell this morning, and has been so for some days.'

'Ah, well! I suppose, like all of us, when about to attain the object of our wishes, she feels a little flurried and—and excited at the near approach of that joyful period or event,' returned Mrs. Ingram, philosophically, and somewhat at a loss how to express such sublime sentiments. 'But we will excuse her,' she added. 'After she is Mrs. James Murray we shall hope to see more of her.'

'By-the-bye, I hear that you and your daughter have been rather annoyed by the ill-timed return and attempted renewal of some childish attentions of a young man—a subaltern officer, I believe, in one of the regiments that has just returned from the Crimea, Mrs. Wyndham,' remarked Mr. Ingram, in a pompous, half-affected, half-reprehensive tone, as if he had a very vague idea of both the person and circumstances alluded to.

'Ah, yes, so I have heard,' chimed in Mrs. Ingram, raising her eyebrows, and looking quite shocked at the presumptuous atrocity of the subaltern officer, as they contemptuously termed Captain Haverty.

'You allude to Captain Haverty, I sup-

pose?' said Mr. Wyndham, coming to the relief of his wife, who seemed rather overpowered by this double discharge of dignified reprehension.

'Captain who?' exlaimed Mrs. Ingram, with affected ignorance and contempt.

'The son, I believe, of that little one-armed man—Colonel Haverty, I think he is called —that we have once or twice met at General Fielden's, and one or two other places occasionally,' replied her husband, as if himself not quite certain upon the point.

'What, that little mutilated man? An Irishman too, I think, with the rather common-looking wife?' inquired Mrs. Ingram, with increased surprise and reprehension in her look. 'Really, what society is coming to I cannot imagine! It is utterly shocking!' she added, holding up her hands, and again elevating her dyed eyebrows, and gently touching her lips with the fine cambric, lace-edged handkerchief she held in her gloved hand, in doing which she unfortunately carried off a small quantity of rouge from her cheek, which in some measure rather marred the pleasing effect of her well-got-up complexion, and carefully attired head and person.

'I'm afraid, Mrs. Ingram, you have rather an unfavourable opinion of Colonel Haverty,' said Mr. Wyndham, who had too much honesty of heart and respect for his old friends to hear such disparaging remarks made about them without expressing some disapproval. 'The colonel is a most honourable, gallant officer, and a generous-hearted man; and his wife is a most amiable, kind-hearted lady. They are both old and valued friends of ours; and I should be sorry indeed to hear anything said that might tend to make us lose the good opinion we have always had of each other, even though circumstances may probably, for a time, somewhat interfere with our long-accustomed interchange of friendly offices and good feeling.'

'Mr. Wyndham is quite right, my dear,' said Mr. Ingram, in an affected tone of magnificent candour, addressing his wife, who had been feigning to look quite astonished at what Mr. Wyndham said. 'I have always understood that this Colonel Haverty—I think I am right in the name, Mr. Wyndham—and his wife are very worthy kind of individuals; and if they hadn't been entitled to some degree of notice, General Fielden wouldn't have countenanced them. Besides, you hear they

are particular and old friends of our worthy friends here, and that ought to be guarantee enough of their respectability for us.'

'But their son must be a very bad young man to try to destroy the peace of mind and prospects of your daughter!' urged Mrs. Ingram, as if bending to the opinion of her husband.

'Well, although I am sorry that he should have made his appearance just at a time when we were anxious that our daughter's feelings should not be disturbed or diverted from the object we have in view, as there always has been a great deal of intercourse and, for some years back, much regard between her and William Haverty, I really, in my own mind, cannot accuse him of being guilty of anything either very flagrantly bad or intentionally ungenerous towards my daughter,' replied Mr. Wyndham.

'Ah, you're too generous, Mr. Wyndham,' said Mrs. Ingram, with half-chiding, affected smile. 'You gentlemen don't look at these things as we ladies do, you see. You don't understand them so well.'

'Now, my dear, as you know we have another call or two to make before we go home——' said Mr. Ingram, rising without

finishing the sentence, while his wife did the same; and, after again going through the ceremony of shaking fingers, Mrs. Ingram swept across the room and out at the door, with a rustling of silk and expanse of crinoline, and a dignity of air and deportment that would have done credit to the queen-consort of the Railway-king when in the full-blown pride of her husband's power and influence.

Mr. Wyndham was ready to lead her to the carriage, and politely offered his arm for that purpose, upon which she just laid the tips of the scented, pink-kid gloves on his left hand, as she affected to enter the chariot with a juvenile air and elastic step, while the liveried footman stood holding the door open with one hand, and with the other touching the brim of his gold-laced hat, as his proud mistress went past him, and took her place in the carriage, after which his master entered it also, and with a slight wave of his left hand, mumbled out 'By, by,' to Mr. Wyndham, as he threw himself back upon the seat facing his wife, who had already resumed her usual placid position in the back of the carriage; and away they rolled, calm, cold, and pompous, as if they had neither

schemes, cares nor feelings of their own to agitate their breasts or animate their natures : satisfied in their own minds that this visit was specially made to the Wyndhams for the double purpose of ascertaining how far the return of Captain Haverty was likely to interfere with the intended marriage of Mr. James Murray and their daughter, and to impress them all the more with the desirableness of the match, and also to try what effect their presence had in keeping up the delusion of unbounded wealth, which they were supposed to possess in the mind of Mr. Wyndham, who, as we have already hinted, had a large sum in the bank of which Mr. Ingram was the senior partner, and was also intimate with several others who had deposits there, some of them even much larger than his own, among whom was General Fielden, who had there upwards of twenty thousand pounds deposited in their hands.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

During the time that Mr. and Mrs. Ingram were paying their visit to the Wyndhams. which did not occupy more than a dozen minutes, William Haverty continued standing gazing abstractedly on the scene around him, every now and then his eyes turning in the direction of Bilford Hall: and sadly thinking of Blanche Wyndham. So occupied was his mind that he did not hear the sound of a light female step coming up the lane, till a slight cough, as if to attract his attention, fell upon his ear and caused him to turn hastily round, when, to his great surprise, he saw Eliza Fleming standing before him.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Eliza, with a respectful curtsey, looking rather surprised herself; 'but as I saw it was you, sir, I thought you might like me to speak to you,

and to let you know how my—I mean, how master and mistress and all are down at the house,' said she, with some embarrassment in her manner.

'Thank you, Eliza, I am much obliged to you for doing so,' replied the captain, trying to conceal the emotions excited by the sudden appearance of Blanche Wyndham's faithful attendant. 'I hope your—your master and mistress are well—and—and Miss Wyndham also,' he added with an effort.

'Yes, thank ye, sir, master and mistress is both well, but Miss Blanche is very poorly,' said Eliza, still slightly confused, as if she hardly knew how to speak of her to him.

'Indeed; I am sorry to hear it,' he replied, with an appearance of composure which rather puzzled the servant.

'Ay, sir, ye would be if ye only saw what I see, and know'd what I know,' exclaimed Eliza, the tears suddenly starting in her eyes as she spoke; 'and it's all your fault too!' she added half angrily.

'My fault, Eliza! In what way?' asked William Haverty, with a half-startled look at the agitation of the servant.

'So it is, sir,' she repeated energetically. 'If ye didn't mean to prevent that bad man,

—who is old enough to be her father, too, the dear thing—from having her, what business had ye to come back at all, now, just to upset the dear young lady, and make her ten times more unhappy about her going to be married to that Mr. Murray than she was before?'

'Why, Eliza, what right or power have I to interfere in preventing Miss Wyndham's marriage with Mr. Murray? She or her parents alone can do that. If she doesn't wish it, she ought to tell her father and mother so, and surely they would never attempt to force her to marry against her own wishes.'

'But I tell ye they are going to do it,' rejoined Eliza, warmly; 'and there the poor dear young creature is breaking her very heart at the thoughts of it, and ye won't do anything to save her.'

'Why, Eliza, what can I do?' inquired the captain, who, in spite of the reserve he had tried to assume in his manner, could not altogether conceal his emotion and interest in the subject. 'I have neither power nor authority to interfere in such a matter.'

'Then, if I was ye, I would take it, sir,' said Eliza, firmly.

'But I've no right to do anything of the kind.'

'Well, I say again, if I was ye, I would take it.'

'But why should I take upon myself to do anything of the kind? If Miss Wyndham's own parents approve of the marriage, no one else has any business to object to it.'

'But I say some one else has business to interfere, when the dear young lady's breaking her heart, and dying by inches,' rejoined Eliza Fleming emphatically, again forcing back her tears.

'I don't see why you should think so, Eliza,' returned the captain, quietly. 'Miss Wyndham, as I daresay you are aware, has informed me herself, and her parents have told me also, of her intended marriage with Mr. James Murray. By what right, then, could I interfere in a matter I have no control over whatever?'

'Yes, but they're forcing her to it.'

'Well, but you must know I cannot prevent them, Eliza. She need not consent to it herself, if she does not wish it.'

'But what is the poor dear thing to do?' asked Eliza. 'Since you've come back and never tried to stop it, and master and missus

always at her about it, and telling her she must have him? But ye are just as bad as any of them, to see the dear young lady breaking her very heart, and ye won't try to save her!'

'Why should you think that I have any right to assume such power, Eliza? and, if I even did attempt to assume it, how do you know that Miss Wyndham herself either wishes or would permit me to do so? In fact, she has already told me not even to try to see her, as my presence would only make her unhappy. Why, then, should I disobey her own wishes by interfering in what I have no power to prevent taking place? Has she expressed any wish to you that I should do so?'

'*She!* I should think not, sir!' exclaimed Eliza, as if half offended at the question. 'Do ye think my young missus does not know her own place, and hasn't no more spirit than that?'

'Then why should you blame me for not doing so, especially when you do not even know that she would thank me for it?'

'Ay, but I do know. Do ye think I've nursed and attended that young lady ever since she was a child, and don't know what

she wants and what she thinks of without being told?' said Eliza. 'I tell ye again, if ye let that man have my young mistress, and don't try to prevent him, then ye don't deserve ever to have any happiness yourself for your cruelty.'

'Well, I'm afraid, Eliza, I am little likely to have any as it is,' replied Captain Haverty, in a voice of deep, suppressed emotion.

'And haven't ye any answer to Miss Blanche's letter that I gave your man to deliver to ye, sir?' asked Eliza, who seemed to take upon herself full power and authority to call him to account in the cause of what she considered her ill-used young mistress.

'No, Eliza; she herself strictly charged me not to send any answer to it.'

'And ye don't mean to, then?'

'No, I cannot do so after that.'

'Then ye don't care no more for her, after all, than notbing?' cried Eliza, almost fiercely.

'Eliza,' said William, with bitter emphasis, 'I know very well that you are not ignorant of the affection that has long existed between myself and Miss Wyndham, for, whatever her feelings now are, I believe she once had much tender regard for me.'

'Why, she loved ye, sir, as her own heart,

and does so still,' exclaimed Eliza, who evidently thought William Haverty's words less expressive of passion than they ought to be.

'Well, Eliza, I have no reason to suppose *that*, after what she has written me with her own hand,' replied the captain, less bitterly. 'But now that she is about to become the wife of another, you cannot be so ignorant of what is due to both her character and happiness and my own, as to think I ought still to intrude myself upon her, or to offer any obstruction to the fulfilment of her own and her parents' wishes. And, as she distinctly said in her last letter that I was not to reply to it, I really cannot think of doing so, as I have no doubt she does not wish any.'

'Do you know so little of a woman's mind, sir, as to think that if even she wished you to abide by what she said then, that she does so still?' asked Eliza.

'Why, I've no reason to suppose she either did not mean what she said then, or has changed her mind since.'

'Then, I tell ye, sir, she either did not expect ye would be so ready to comply with a wish that didn't come from her heart, or she has changed her mind since.'

'Indeed! why do you think so?' inquired our hero, pleased in spite of himself.

'I'll tell ye why, sir,' replied Eliza, in a confidential tone. 'Every time she has known the postman to be at the door, she has asked if there was no letter for her; and looked so disappointed and sad afterwards, that it has made my heart ache to see her. And though she has never mentioned your name to me, I know she's always a-thinking of ye: and she'll sometimes stand, until she hasn't strength to stand any longer, a-gazing out of her window, which looks toward your house, where she can just see the smoke of the chimneys rising above the trees; and then she'll turn away and cry till her beautiful eyes are red, and sob as if her dear heart would break, because she cannot see ye—and ye don't come to save her from being forced to marry Mr. James Murray! There, now, I've told ye my mind, and if ye don't prevent it now, or even say a word to her that I met ye here and told ye what I've done, I hope it will never——'

'Nay, Eliza, don't wish me less happiness than I have,' exclaimed the captain, interrupting her.

But she paused not to hear any more,

for she was off as fast as her legs and nimble feet could carry her, in the direction of Bilford Hall, leaving him standing alone, puzzled and distressed at what he had heard.

END OF VOL. I.

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